PILGRIMAGE, RISK-TAKING MISSION AND DYNAMIC SPIRITUAL AND CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

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This context for this project is Prosper United Methodist Church in Prosper, Texas. The problem is affluent Christians using their assumed power to define others from different socio-economic locations. The hypothesis is by creating relationships between suburban pilgrims and poorer individuals from urban Latino communities will assist suburbanites to suspend their naming power. Relationships will form through service projects, shared meals, and worship experiences. Results will be measured by pilgrim interviews, an interview with the associate pastor in Oak Cliff, and follow-up pilgrim surveys. The anticipated outcome will be the withholding of naming by suburban pilgrims of their lesser-resourced neighbors.

INTRODUCTION

When I arrived as the Senior Pastor to Prosper United Methodist Church in July 2011, this small church in a fast-growing affluent suburban community had not shown significant growth in the last few years. Worship attendance and membership had been stagnated for a decade. I believed that opportunities for growth existed outside of the church walls by engaging and relating to local neighbors. Since the church had not been reaching people from the same ethnicity and socio-economic realities, I had confidence that the next step would be to reach out to a different demographic. Mission and community service changed my life because it connected me to people that, if left to my own schedule and lifestyle, I would never had encountered and ultimately called friends. The grace unleashed into my life through those relationships was the type of grace that I believed could ignite change in the church. My project shifted with the relocation to Prosper. In my estimation, the most effective means for the affluent Christians of Prosper UMC to experience that grace would come through a mission trip that took them out of the range of their comfort zone. I chose Send Hope, a non-profit orphanage and school in Puerto Lempira, Honduras, as the destination.

Initially, the youth in the church showed great enthusiasm about getting involved in international mission. No fewer than ten youth signed up to go. By the following February, people had to turn in their deposits for the trip, and only two of the initial

signees did so. Between July and February, parents and youth alike explained that their reluctance centered on the fact that the trip was dangerous and full of too many unknowns. Parents confessed this would be the first time they, or their children, would leave the United States. The teens could go, but only with parents as guardians, and the parents were not going to go. I understood their angst. In college, I took my first international trip to work for Habitat For Humanity International to southern Mexico. My parents were uneasy about the trips because they had never traveled abroad and were anxious about my safety. I realized they did not have personal experience of traveling abroad from which to draw, but they did have the experience of migrant workers and other Mexican immigrants that lived and worked in our community. The Mexican immigrants were considered inferior, uncivilized, and dangerous, their views had been shaped by the images, stereotypes, and negative perspective of their culture. The social distance of my parents as well as the geographic distance of the hidden immigrant neighborhoods from whites did not promote deep relationships and understanding.

When I addressed concerned parents, I defended the security of the trip by elaborating upon the five trips I took to Honduras. I attempted to assure the parents and youth that, while no trip is without risks, I had gone many times without incident and there were youth from my previous church that had gone as well. The parents were not reassured. While many of these families had traveled all over the world for business and even to third-world countries to reach exotic vacation destinations, this trip to Honduras was too risky for them. I identified the same social and physical separation I witnessed in the lives of my own family in the suburban families of the Prosper community.

As the mission trip slowly fell apart, I observed more intense expressions of fear and stereotyping. The feelings were strong and continued to keep the youth and parents from being open to the mission trip and building relationships with their neighbors from different socio-economic backgrounds. Henri Nouwen captures this tension in his book, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life.* He writes, "Our heart might desire to help others: to feed the hungry, visit prisoners and offer a shelter to travelers; but meanwhile we have surrounded ourselves with a wall of fear and hostile feelings, instinctively avoiding people and places where we might be reminded of our good intentions."[1]

As some liberation theologies argue, these fears and negative attitudes run deep, and they are tied tightly to the Christian colonial tradition. As I witnessed the mission trip falter, I viewed what was unfolding as an extension of a worldview that started centuries ago. It was a postcolonial worldview that has existed in different iterations always finding a way to bolster privilege and power for some while oppressing and marginalizing others. Even though people cite the reasons for their flight to the suburbs as wanting better lives, better educations, and better home values, they were moving away from the people and communities they associated with violence, poor education and an absence of value. Instead of being motivated to use the power and privilege they wield to combat marginalization or the destructive naming and derogatory labeling woven into the dominant narrative of the affluent reinforces division and enmity, they use suburban political and social resources to perpetuate the stratification and bias that exists instead of subverting it.

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[1] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Spiritual Life in Three Movements* (New York, NY: Image Books Doubleday, 1966), 68.

When affluent families use their resources to move to different communities, it does not assure healthy relationships and community with people from the same socio-economic background. It is easy for an individual to be isolated and distant from his or her next-door neighbor just as they are alienated from the experiences of people outside of their communities and subdivisions. Nouwen speaks to the hostility and ambivalence that people can have toward strangers or new people. In numerous conversations, suburban parents have shared that they do not know the people who live next door to them, because their primary contexts for building relationships are based on their children's or grandchildren's functions at school and or in sports activities.

The connections built around children's activities cannot promise intimate and authentic relationships either. David Goetz points out that "the friendships may be thin, though, arising largely around perceived collaboration of team goals."[2] As long as parents keep their egos in check and competitive drive and goals stay the same, then relationships are likely to stay intact as long as the teams stay together. If one set of children have more ability or greater aspirations, then the relationships break down while one individual or group transfers to a higher-level team and the other players remain.[3]

How can affluent Christians in suburban communities begin to break through the "wall of fear and hostile feelings" ingrained into their psyche and worldview?[4] How does the church introduce and promote a biblical worldview resists the power of bias and prejudice that drives damaging labels and stereotypes by those who live in the wake of

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[2] David Goetz, *Death by Suburbia: How to Keep the Suburbs From Killing Your Soul* (San Francisco, CA: Harpers, 2006), 150.

[3] Ibid., 150.

[4] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Spiritual Life in Three Movements*, 68.

socio-economic and ethnic privilege? Can the Wesleyan understanding of the means of grace frame how missional journeys into communities that are categorized as poor, or at-risk? Additionally, can a catalyst be established for developing relationships that help affluent pilgrims to reconsider how they use their power and privilege and for those labeled as "disenfranchised" to claim their power to define their own life experience?

Two dynamics influenced the development of this project: the relational dynamics between affluent Christians and their equally affluent neighbors and the multitude of barriers keeping affluent Christians from connecting to those who, in comparison to them, are not as economically resourced.[5] Suburban relationships, especially among affluent families, have their own set of struggles. With one or both spouses working and traveling, along with sports and extracurricular activities of children, often there is little time or energy for people to do things outside of work and organized recreational activities. This full schedule psychologically and physically insulate families from people who do not share an affinity for the same things. This pressure takes its toll on people's ability to sustain relationships of any depth within their own families, much less in the community and around the world. This isolation shapes how families imagine doing ministry. One of the recurring comments made about church activities by some of the member families is that there is not much mission work they can do as a family. These member families acknowledge a sense of fatigue and isolation from family members during the chaos of weekly activities. They want whatever other activities they may undertake outside of those weekly activities in their lives to bring their families closer together.

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[5] David Goetz, *Death by Suburbia: How to Keep the Suburbs From Killing Your Soul,* 15.

The challenge for a church that desires to do mission and community service is to create mission experiences that integrate parents, teens, and children into meaningful ministry together. While there are theological challenges that have to be taken into consideration for doing intergenerational ministry like this, there are also practical issues like sleeping arrangements for different age levels and pedagogical considerations for different developmental levels. Other issues include the types of supervision necessary for children if they are doing ministry in the presence of someone other than their parents. What types of missional activities would I have that people of all ages and physical capabilities can do and feel like they have contributed? These are important considerations. In finding various activities for the Family Missional Pilgrimage that involve different ages creates opportunities to not only decolonize the minds of adults, but to try and inoculate the minds and hearts of children and teenagers being formed in cultures of privilege.

The impact suburban Christian culture has on a family's willingness to engage in ministry with the disenfranchised also must be addressed. When I use the terms suburban Christian culture, I am referring to a culture of privilege that expresses itself in a desire for modern buildings, great worship performance, and exceptional children and youth programming. If one considers that two thousand plus references to justice, helping the poor, the widow, the orphan and those who are marginalized and under-resourced when compared to others as a sign of God's priorities, then it could be argued that the values of this affluent Christian culture may be out of line with God's values. When suburban congregations reflect these values their ecclesiology invites a disconnect between building deep relationships with the diversity of people in their local and global context.

Further people surround themselves with people they know, agree with the things they believe, and live out their faith in narrow avenues that reinforce their worldview and solidify the invisible bubble that insulates their communities and personal lives. This is not a phenomena particular to churches. It is something one can see in the political arena with the intense partisanship that one sees among democrats and republicans. There is very little middle ground between the extremes that is tolerated and one can see it in the media, in the pews, and in any other place that people share ideas.

In this project, I will test the hypothesis that intentional reflection and intermingling of suburban, mostly Caucasian, middle-class Christians with Christians and community members from a predominantly urban Latino United Methodist Church in Oak Cliff, Texas can serve as a means of grace. Through this means of grace, love will change negative attitudes that fuel the use of negative labels and images that reinforce the worldview of privilege and solidify the will to maintain, if not strengthen, the systems of oppression that push people with few social or economic resources to the fringes of society. Often individuals and communities such as this are referred to as the "poor." By the term "poor," I mean families or individuals who do not have a certain amount of financial resources and material property to provide enough food, quality education, sufficient health care, and housing. These families and individuals also lack the relational or material resources to relocate to acquire them. Because being "poor" is relative to the resources of the people around someone, it is possible for people not to be aware that they are poor until someone with more resources labels them as such. That is the dynamic that I am trying to overcome. When people are classified as "poor", one who has resources is tempted not to see them as real people with real names, real dreams, and

loved just as much by God. And, instead of being rescued from poverty, they warrant the opportunity to chose what kind of life they want to live and their insight and resources to relationships to achieving their goals need to be honored and valued.

In particular, the change in attitude that I am searching for is recognition of the cultural power and assumed authority suburban Christians carry to name and categorize others in ways that perpetuate negative images that justify systematic discrimination and oppression. Also, I hoped that suburban Christians would be willing to reconsider the negative naming and labeling born from certain stereotypes, in light of building deeper relationships with people who are pushed to the fringes by the institutional and social norms of the affluent in our society. The final anticipated result is that suburban Christians will show a desire to continue investing in these relationships in the future and resist using their power to name others and allow them to name and interpret their own reality.

Ultimately, for this particular suburban congregation, this project represents a first step in a larger process for congregational transformation. If this congregation can engage and diminish the fears and negative attitudes that may be prevalent toward the under-resourced people in its community and in North Texas, then maybe the church could be open to embrace and build relationships with all types of people. The next step, or project, would be to test the openness of those that go on several Family Mission Pilgrimages to naming and confronting the fear and negative attitudes they have about reaching out and building deep relationships with their affluent neighbors moving into Prosper community.

As for this project, Chapter One will discuss my spiritual journey and how I felt called and equipped to do this project. I will do a contextual analysis on the congregation in Prosper and provide some demographic information for the project's destination in Oak Cliff, Texas. Chapter Two will identify and discuss some contemporary voices that have influenced my development and implementation of the project. Chapter Three will explore the biblical, historical, and theological foundations that helped cultivate the project. Chapter Four will articulate the risks involved in the Family Missional Pilgrimage. Chapter Five will explain how the project was implemented and the results from the project. In Chapter Six, I will interpret the data, talk about new learning, and give potential outcomes for the project. Because of the lack of sufficient scope in the project outcomes, I will consider two different pilgrimage experiences to illustrate their method and results. Finally, Chapter Seven will interpret the data, speak to lessons learned, and give my own conclusions. Part of this conclusion will discuss my own personal pilgrimage as a pastor and researcher. The theme of my journey addresses the challenges associated with being missional pastor in an itinerant system.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Spiritual Pilgrimage

I am an ordained elder in the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church and currently appointed as the senior pastor of a suburban United Methodist Church. I am an only child and I was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and spent my first eighteen years growing up in rural North Carolina. My parents often worked long hours to make ends meet, so I spent a great deal of time with my maternal grandparents, who were tobacco farmers.

It was my maternal grandmother, the matriarch of the family, who made sure that until I earned my driver's license, I regularly attended a local United Methodist Church with her. I loved my church but I was aware of how the unconditional love of God seemed limited to those who looked, thought, and acted like the farm owners and prominent families of that rural community. Having worked in the fields with migrant workers and hired hands who were mostly African-American and Hispanic, I often wondered what would happen if the field workers shared the Holy Communion table with their bosses and the other farm owners in the community? What would happen if the farm owners did more than just pick up "the help" from their run-down trailers and poorly maintained homes, but instead showed God's love by making sure that the trailer homes

they rented from the land owners were in good repair and had running water? The norms used to describe and address the field workers I grew up with were filled with negativity and condescension. Due to the location of where the migrant workers lived and how they lived, they needed the work offered by families like mine and were often pitied for the struggles they endured. Struggles and chaos that I learned later were and still are part of the oppressive relationships that we perpetuated for our socio-economic and psychological benefit.

Even with those questions in the back of my mind, I did not know how to act on them. I did not know how to articulate the dissonance I was feeling and from my social place as a kid in the South, I had little space to imagine a world different from my own, let alone withstand the social repercussions for living and acting differently. I continued to reflect upon the racism and prejudice I had experienced, not knowing how to address issues that were so interwoven into my culture and my personal life. Truthfully, I did not want to see any way to address the circumstances and being unwilling to deal with the complications of asking uncomfortable questions, I took no action.

I was often present at church and took part in Sunday school, vacation Bible school, youth group, and other activities. I did not serve in any recognized leadership roles. Participation in my local church reached its apex during his junior year in high school when I accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior at a traveling evangelist's service one Sunday evening. I interpreted the change in my heart and the renewed passion I experienced as the work of God through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit moved my heart as I felt a passion to give my life to God and experience redemption. After I gave the evangelist's sponsoring church my name and contact information, I expected to

receive a phone call or some type of follow-up but received nothing. The absence of follow-up after such an emotional and spiritual moment was deeply disillusioning and my involvement in the church began to fade, as did my relationship with God.

Soon, my attention turned to college and, after being the first in my family to be accepted to a four-year institution of higher education, I looked to enjoy a good education and all of the partying, fraternities, and social atmosphere that college offered. Yet, God had other plans. During my first week of orientation, I was invited by another college student to attend a worship service one afternoon near the center of campus. I still carried with me the disillusionment and rejection I felt from not feeling valued enough by the traveling evangelist's team to be contacted. I carried those emotions in the back of my mind. The refreshing music and lyrics played with a trio of acoustic guitars encouraged me to re-engage with God through this ministry.

Over the next two years, I immersed myself in the para-church organization that sponsored the event, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. I attended weekly worship services, small group Bible studies, as well as fall and spring retreats. I even led studies and gave talks at the retreats. As I served in leadership and grew spiritually in this organization, I realized that the spirituality of my peers was formed in a different socio-economic context. The organization seemed to be populated by mostly white, middle-class college students who grew up in college towns or suburban communities. When it came to talking about God in the context of this Christian campus organization, I was all too aware of his different perspective. Instead of seeing this encounter with people from a different socio-economic context as an opportunity to learn and grow, I allowed the dissonance I was experiencing to push me slowly away from the group. It was an

experience of feeling like I was on the margin of that group. Even though I worked hard to stay connected to the campus ministry, I was not considered for executive leadership, or to be mentored by the staff leaders of the group. I felt I just did not fit in.

During the height of my para-church involvement, I discerned a call to ministry. At first, I did not want to entertain the idea that it was a call to lead a church as a pastor. I had committed to considering almost any other possibility such as Christian counselor, camp counselor, or chaplain. After I preached my first sermon on the Sunday after Christmas in 1997, I felt an internal confirmation that I was being called to be a preacher and a leader in the church. Realizing that I wanted to make serving God and walking with others on their spiritual journey my full-time vocation, I changed my major from chemistry to religious studies. I immersed myself in leadership in the para-church group, started preaching on a regular basis in my home church, and found myself energized by the classes on church history and religion. It was during a psychology and religion class that I felt my faith was taken, laid out on a table, and dismantled. Many of the assumptions and foundational beliefs integral to the passion and place for God in my life had been challenged. I sought out friends and other pastors, but they could not give me the tools I needed to make sense of my faith. Even though I was reeling spiritually, I could not let go of the call that I had felt upon my life to serve God. The conservative Christianity that had been nurtured through life experience in college could no longer work, so I turned back to my roots: the United Methodist Church. I sought out the United Methodist campus ministry in hopes of finding a more tolerant and understanding atmosphere to deal with my questions.

While I attempted to rediscover a faith that had been left in ruins, I determined that love was still the foundation for any faith that would arise from the rubble. Love was more than a description of an emotion; love was a verb. No longer could I trust the concepts and abstractions of faith that seemingly had failed me, but the concrete living out of love was something in which I could believe. I began doing various service projects and took my first trip to Mexico to work with Habitat for Humanity International. It was on this mission trip that I experienced the realities of extreme poverty and found a place where I could see my efforts make a profound difference. Over the next two years, I took more trips to Mexico with Habitat for Humanity. With each visit I realized that not only was I helping to change lives, but also God was changing me. Looking back, I realized that I carried with me the privileged posture of helping to save people from their circumstances. In retrospect, these were mission trips in which I was the subject and the "poor" people were the objects I acted upon. My awareness of others grew, but I did not have the tools to see the next level of what being in relationship with others could mean.

Because I still felt strongly about honoring my call to ministry, I enrolled in a local United Methodist affiliated seminary. It was a place with tremendous academic credentials, but I found it lacking in fieldwork and internships. With little field experience being offered by the seminary that would take me out of the same small rural context I grew up in. I began to do my own research to find an internship that met my needs and discovered an opportunity to serve at a United Methodist affiliated community center in an urban Latino neighborhood of West Dallas. For the summer of 1997, I lived in the community and worked with children's literacy, nutrition programs, and gang

intervention programs. After just a few weeks, there was much more for me to learn about ministry in Hispanic communities and the desire existed to bring what I learned and experienced back to North Carolina. There was much to learn about myself and to identify God's place and purpose for me. After all, my greatest realizations about my own capacity had come from all of the times I had left the comfortable places in my life to travel to other countries to build homes and participate in activities with the poorest of the poor. These types of activities took me out of my comfort zone. I mentored and taught youth and families involved in gangs, taught general equivalency degree classes, and helped organize an afterschool programming.

What I did not realize at the time was that I was learning the names, the dreams, and the hopes of the people with whom I was working. In talking to well-intentioned suburban churches, I realized most of them did not have a context that offered them experiences or relationships with the type of depth that challenged them, to move beyond their privileged generalizations and assumptions. Many did not want to expend the time and energy needed to cultivate those types of relationships. They used the community center as an intermediary for the good works and charity they wanted to do. On the other side of the equation serving in a suburban church, it is important to build bridges between different socio-economic communities that impact one another economically and politically, but do not present apparent social and relational ties.

Recognizing the incredible opportunity to grow and wanting to continue my degree program, I inquired about the possibility of doing the internship required for graduation between my first and second year in seminary. Normally, seminary students were required to complete their internship, or field experience, between their second and

third year of academic work. The Dean of Students at the Duke Divinity School explained that there would have to be certain academic and supervision requirements that the project would need to meet. I turned to Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University for academic support to guide the academic and theological reflections that were integral to a fieldwork experience. I asked my executive director for her permission to invite community residents and the staff of the community center to participate in the lay peer committees that were required to process and give feedback on my daily activities and effectiveness.

Finally, after sixteen months working at the community center, it occurred to me that my passion did not lie in small-town or rural ministry, but in urban ministry. My passion and call to urban ministry explains some of the conflicted emotions I have in serving suburban mission fields. Some of my frustration was the recognition that the roots of paternalism and prejudice were within me, as a privileged person in society. I struggle to relinquish my power in my personal relationships and in my ministry. With my calling in mind, I moved from my mostly rural context in North Carolina to Dallas, Texas. I transferred my membership and candidacy for ministry to the North Texas Annual Conference. I served the community center for two more years before being appointed to serve three inner-city congregations over the next eight years. During my work in West Dallas, I met Graciela, a young Mexican American woman, who was working in West Dallas. She came to the United States when her mother brought her across the border at six months of age to reunite with her father who had been working in the U.S. for two years. We were married at Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church. I entered into an interreligious, interethnic relationship and continued to cross boundaries that

shaped my life. Today, with two young children, who are of European and Hispanic heritage, I agonize over the challenges they will face because of racism and prejudice. Having come from a place of privilege, how do I prepare them for people who will judge them because of their skin color, their parents, or their names? My oldest son has physical features from his mother, but his name does not hint at his Hispanic heritage. My youngest son has a name that comes from his Hispanic heritage. Will people read his name and make judgments about him? As one can see, I have more questions than I do answers. This has been a time of listening to my wife and her experiences of bias and racism. Supporting her as she talks about what she has had to overcome in her life. It has challenged me to not pretend I have all the answers, but take the position of one that has much to learn.

After almost a decade of working in an urban context, I was appointed to a medium-sized congregation in a small town an hour drive southeast of Dallas, Texas. This would be my first appointment outside of the inner city and I was anxious about gauging this congregation's desire to do mission and my own reaction to being sent to a place that resembled the churches I did not want to serve in North Carolina. What did ministry look like when the realities of life, death, and poverty do not have to be negotiated every day? How would I nourish my soul in a place that may not be open to more robust forms of mission and service than simple food and coat drives? More than me, what would this new context mean for my family? This is a predominantly middle class Euro-American congregation in a small East Texas town. How would they be welcomed into the congregation and received by the community?

When my family and I arrived, I found a church lacking a clear vision and thirst for meaningful and life-changing ministry. I was able to guide the congregation into incredible ministries with the homeless, orphans in Honduras, the hungry and addicted living in and around the community. There was a nucleus of leaders in the church willing to move past acts of charity and ask deeper questions about the impact of racism, prejudice, mental illness, and poverty. The leadership was willing to invest just as much money in serving the broken in the community as they were in the ministries that served the members of the church. It was a tremendous time of ministry and an incredibly exhausting time for me. It took time to meet with leaders and mentor them in this more missional way of doing church. It was also intense because there was significant resistance to doing church differently. Sometimes, it came from people who did not understand what we were trying to accomplish. Other times, there were people who only wanted to do church the same way that had been doing before I arrived.

Drawing upon the work and research I had been doing with neo-monastic communities, I dug deeply into the ancient spiritual disciplines of fasting, service, scripture, and sacrament. This led the church to launch a house church in one of the poorest and most violent communities in the area. Over time, I rediscovered the energy and vision for the next chapter in the small-town church. However, God had other plans for my family and me.

In the spring of 2011, I was appointed to a small suburban United Methodist church in a fast-growing area. The church sat in the midst of fast suburban growth, yet had not grown in the last decade. The reason for the appointment was for me to use my gifts of motivation and innovation to help the church reach out to all of the new people

moving into the community. Now I was doing ministry in a place very different from any of my other appointments, and was being asked to serve people with different demographic backgrounds that I had spent the last fifteen years seeking to serve. I found myself asking a question that was raised at his first week of study at United Theological Seminary: Why did God call me, and my particular gifts, to serve in this particular appointment?

Context for Ministry

At the time I began my Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary, I was appointed to a suburban United Methodist Church in Prosper, Texas. The United Methodist Church meets in a small country church built in 1924. The church was chartered in 1902 when members from Smith's Chapel Methodist Church, South, moved a couple of miles north to take advantage of the coming railroad.[1] For over eighty years, the town's population did not exceed 500 people. Then, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, people began to move into the Prosper area.

In 1990, the population reached 1,130.[2] In the midst of this growth and with the anticipation of more, the church made several strategic decisions. After decades of pastors being full-time students and part-time pastors, the leadership of the church took a "leap of faith" and asked for a full-time appointment. They had no idea where they were going to get the money or how they were going to make the financial commitment, but it was a step they deeply believed they had to take. Soon after the appointment, the church

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[1] Judy Rucker, *Celebrating Deep Roots, Sowing Seeds* (McKinney, TX: 2012), 3.

[2] "Prosper, Texas Population History" Quick Facts, accessed on October 2013, http://www.biggestuscities.com/city/prosper-texas.

reached out in faith again and built a new parsonage for the pastoral family. Using the definitions provided in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, the church was in the "Bureaucracy" phase of the Congregational Life Cycle.[3] They had been unable to effectively reach out to the local community or develop a strategy to grow in the midst of incredible population increases. What kept people connected was the nostalgia of the "little old country church" and fond memories of how church used to be. The internal tension within the congregation is evident in how they deal with conflict. While much of the interactions around conflict would have been classified as "Solving Problems," in meetings when the conversations were focused on strategic decisions about how the church will grow (i.e. starting another campus or selling the current campus), the level of conflict escalated to "Disagreement."[4] When the conversation was limited to solving problems, the issues were not personal and people were open to different ways to find a solution. When deeper issues were being dealt with, conversations got heated and the deep divide in the church about the current sanctuary and future plans to abandon it caused strife. There was a contingency of people who feared that in growing and changing venues, the connection to the rich heritage they valued would be severed and replaced by a contemporary church that was not what they desired.

During this time of stepping out in faith, the church bore fruit in ministry. The seeds were planted for two of the strongest ministries, a preschool and a community food bank.[5] Begun almost thirty years ago as a mother's day out program, the preschool has

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[3] Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 118.

[4] Ibid., 123.

evolved into more than a daycare. In 2012, it served approximately fifty families. Another ministry the church offered was a food pantry that began meeting the needs of a few local families by providing food and other forms of assistance.[5] In 2012, the food pantry served 363 families, collected Christmas gifts for 300 families, and passed out 145 Thanksgiving baskets.[6] In 2002, as a response to the need for more space because of the community's growth, the church made the decision to build an education building adjacent to the sanctuary. It was an addition that provided extra classrooms, office space, a full kitchen, and a fellowship hall. The amount of the original loan was approximately $500,000.

In the ten years between 2000 and 2010, the small country church in an outlying rural area became a small country church in a suburban community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Prosper grew from 1,018 to 9,423. In 2000, the median income for Prosper, Texas, was $64,063 and by 2011 it had risen to $110,790. While the town of Prosper grew, however, the congregation did not see any growth. In 2000, the average worship attendance was 200 on Sunday morning. In 2010, the average worship attendance was 159 at the principle worship services. With a change in context, the now small suburban church had tried different visioning efforts. In 2005, selected leaders participated in a Vision and Values Workshop. Then, in 2007 a Joel Committee (named after a prophet in the Old Testament) was commissioned to discern a vision and create a strategy plan. During the 2009 recession, the financial and membership growth that had been expected did not manifest and again, another set of plans and visions for the

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[5] Judy Rucker, *Celebrating Deep Roots, Sowing Seeds,* 13.

[6] Elizabeth Turner, "Stewardship Meeting of Bethlehem Place" November 8, 2012.

future were shelved.[7] It was during those difficult financial times that the associate pastor was reassigned to her own church and the position of church administrator was vacated for lack of funds. The church also experienced the dismissal of a part-time music minister in a move that fractured the church.

As shown in Table 1 below, while the suburban United Methodist church had committed to serving people in the community, its membership was not fully representative of the demographics around the church. There was a high density of Hispanic American and African Americans within a quarter mile of the church building. Outside of that radius, the demographic was primarily made up of White middle-class families with young children and teenagers. In 2011, the ethnic breakdown for Prosper showed 94% (7,590 people) the community were Whites, while 7.5% (669 individuals) were Hispanic, 4.2% (421 individuals) were Blacks, 1.9% (173 individuals) were Asian, and 0.5% (52 individuals) were American Indian and other races.

Table 1. Demographic breakdown of suburban church membership, 2007–2012[8]

Ethnicity	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
African American/Black	0	0	0	0	3	0
Asian	1	1	1	2	2	0
Hispanic	5	2	2	2	2	10
Multiracial	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	380	423	385	336	359	441

[7] Judy Rucker, *Celebrating Deep Roots*, 16.

[8] North Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church 2008-2013.

Also, while the population had grown in North Texas and around in Prosper, Table 2 shows that the membership of the United Methodist Church had decreased. Even though the membership had grown, worship attendance had been flat with a recent increase.

Table 2. Comparison of suburban church membership, worship attendance, and professions of faith, 2007–2012.[9]

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Membership	381	426	388	388	366
Worship Attendance	132	155	161	159	180
Professions of Faith	5	25	14	15	16

The North Texas Conference sought to address these concerns. In 2009, the North Texas Conference contracted with Don Nations, a church consultant. He worked with thirty churches that showed great potential for growth. He and his company made site visits to the individual churches and made short-term recommendations for growth. Then, pastors and lay leaders were invited to group gatherings led by Don Nations or his associates around strategic topics that were essential for leveraging growth in their communities. In 2011, the North Texas Conference retained the services of Paul Nickerson, another church consultant, to work specifically with my suburban church. Repeatedly, Prosper had searched for a way to break through the 200-barrier in worship attendance so that it could reach new people who were moving into the community. After the growth and energy from each attempt, the church continued to reach over two hundred people on Sunday morning and then worship attendance decreased.

[9] North Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church 2008-2013.

This brought changes to church programming and enabled growth. For the first time in its almost thirty-year history, the church's preschool accepted and helped subsidize tuition for a family from a lower socio-economic background. This allowed a family outside the dominant demographic of affluent mothers who needed a mother's day out or preschool program to provide activities and basic educational opportunities for younger children. As mentioned in the introduction, the church took its first international mission trip to work with the Send Hope ministry in Puerto Lempira, Honduras. With the initial enthusiasm about the trip giving way to the anxiety of parents who were not sure of the safety measures that were involved in such a trip, this started me down the path for this project. Some of the energy that grew from talking about going to Honduras stirred interest in reaching out to the poor in the local community.

While low-income homes and apartments were across the street from the church, there had been some discussion but little done in terms of ministry or relationship building with families and individuals who lived there. After a year of ministry as the pastor of Prosper United Methodist Church, a small group in the church started organizing a feeding ministry to build relationships with neighbors who live in poverty. The people interested in this ministry decided to meet in a trailer park located about a quarter mile from the church. The community was made up mostly of poor Latino immigrants living in mobile homes located by the railroad tracks, and even though it was along a vital road in our community, it went mostly unnoticed. The church started making more intentional efforts to reach out and build relationships with the clients who used the services for the food pantry. The pantry expanded its ministry from distributing goods to providing other services such as gifting bicycles, offering Thanksgiving baskets, and

buying gifts for families and children represented in the Angel Tree giveaway. More and more people from the Prosper United Methodist Church became involved and built relationships with many of the clients who were using the food pantry's services.

The church was focused on one task with two distinct communities. First, it was working with the church coach to build new relationships with the middle- to upper-middle-class families moving into Prosper to share the good news of Jesus Christ. As the church worked with the coach, worship attendance had risen above 200. The administrative council made a strategic decision to lease new usable space at a local elementary school located on the eastern edge of Prosper to make space to start another worshipping community. The church held an open house at the new location and welcomed ten new families interested in starting a new worship service in their community. The second endeavor was to build relationships with the poor and disenfranchised in our community. This was missional evangelism, and how the church balances and integrates the two branches of this commitment will determine a great deal about what kind of church it will become. After the first mission team returned from Honduras without harm, youth and parents were more open to the idea of their children going. For the summer of 2013, the church planned to take a larger group to Honduras. Making these types of commitments to mission trips into the inner city and internationally drew the people of Prosper United Methodist Church outside of its comfort bubble to be the hands and feet of Christ to the hurting, broken, and lost.

Oak Cliff Community

Oak Cliff, the urban community to which the suburban pilgrims traveled, was once a middle-class White suburban of Dallas in the 1950's and 1960's.[10] Over the last four decades it has transitioned into a predominantly Hispanic community with some enclaves of middle class Whites. Within a one-mile radius of the church, 71.9% of the community is Hispanic, 18.7% is African American and 8.1% is White. The median family income for the community is $31,009 and it is projected to decline in five years to $30,762. The federal poverty level is $23,550 for a family of four.[11] Oak Cliff has a higher rate of poverty, 33%, than the Texas average of 14.9%. The vast majority of the community did not graduate high school and work in blue-collar jobs (64%). The largest demographic are Latinos between the ages of thirty-six to forty-five and have teenagers in the house.

Synergy

In moving from the parsonage in Mabank to the parsonage in Prosper, I was in Honduras. Because the announcement of the appointment came so close to the date I was expected to move and had already purchased plane tickets to Honduras in my name, I chose to honor the money and investment of my previous appointment in covering the expenses for a mission trip to Honduras. I left for the trip as the pastor of a small-town United Methodist Church and returned as the pastor of a fast-growing, suburban United Methodist Church. All I could think about on the return trip was: "What does God see in

[10] "QuickInsite Report," MissionInsite, accessed November 17, 2013, http://missioninsite.com/regional-national-agency-products/.

[11] "2013 Poverty Guidelines" U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed October 12, 2013, http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds.

me that will make a difference in this suburban United Methodist Church, a place so different from any I have served?"

As has been the case in my previous appointments, I brought a level of vision and motivation to the suburban congregation and also helped them to reconnect to their own sense of identity and purpose. The suburban United Methodist Church had many ups and downs over the last decade and had lost its connection to the stories of faithfulness that illustrated how God walked with them through adversity in the past. For example, when the church existed in its previous location on Chalk Hill Road, two miles south of its present location, church leaders realized that people were going to move into Prosper because of the planned railroad stop. To reach those new families moving into that area, church leaders decided to take a risk and move their church north to Prosper. The church faced many financial challenges in the ensuing years and had to be frugal and resourceful to build their current facility and to grow, but their sacrifices paid off. As I learned of these stories, I began to retell them to the congregation, reminding them of how God provided a way in the past when they faced challenges and opportunities. In the Old Testament, the people of God were charged to remember God's faithfulness to them in liberating them from slavery. They were reminded how God led them through the wilderness. Remembering was an important part of being God's people and has been an avenue leading the church to a clearer and more compelling vision.

Through my journey from the tobacco fields to the inner city, the small town, and now to the suburbs, I have experience trying to integrate the ministry of evangelism and mission. The spiritual disillusionment of my teenage years set me on a road to take a faith that had been mainly inside of the walls of the church and to seek concrete ways to

experience and to share love. The suburban congregation had lost sight of God's vision and the ability to translate that into practical steps to reach new people because of the pain, frustration, and stagnation of the recent past. In one of the coaching sessions by Paul Nickerson, I learned that the church must build new relationships within a demographic with which it has greater affinity first, then move on to connecting to groups who may have greater differences like language, culture, and location. After all, explained the coach, a church will be more effective in its ministry when it has more people to do it. It has been my experience that plateauing churches have lost the will, capacity, or awareness it takes to not only reach out to a similar demographic, but also to other people-groups as well. I also have seen that any mission activities or community involvement outside of the church building can create a context to start relationships that can lead to rediscovering the power of interacting with people who are not closely associated with a congregation. Even though I did not bring any personal experience of attracting affluent suburban families, I knew how to get people motivated to build relationships with the poor. Also, I brought with me the experience of church members who expressed a desire to find purpose in their lives and for their families. Repeated conversations with church members have reinforced what I had experienced in other churches: some are searching for meaning in the midst of busy-ness, anonymous, life-draining dynamics of their lives. They are looking for a way to make a difference and long for a faith that does more than bring them to church on a Sunday morning. I lived through my own search for meaning. I have found a sense of significance in working with the poor and connecting with the marginalized, and this is a way of finding meaning that I shared in my new suburban context. It was not my role to find meaning for people but

to share the story of Jesus and create the opportunity for individuals and families to reflect Jesus' story of connecting with those marginalized in our society.

There is a temptation that when searching for personal meaning, one can focus too much on one's ego and needs. This can lead to work with the poor and building relationships with different people as a means to meet one's personal needs. The poor can be reduced to objects for spiritual experiences. The risk of making one's work with the poor not about the poor but about meeting personal needs brings with it a spectrum of challenges not always visible on the surface but represent areas of growth along the path of discipleship. Serving in a suburban context where competition, insecurity, ego, and pride may permeate the culture, presents a potential obstacle at the root of the attitudes people live out. Moving people past a self-centered perspective in changing prejudicial attitudes means it is essential to promote interactive mission opportunities that include people from different socio-economic backgrounds. The annual pilgrimage will be one mechanism for spurring interaction between different socio-economic groups and will encourage participants to set aside time, prioritize financial responsibilities, build deeper relationships among the poor, and continue to cultivate a broader understanding of a more Christ-like perception of our neighbors. This project was meant to initiate personal change for church members and over the long term, a change in the suburban congregation.

Leading a church through change is not easy, which is something that I had done in two of my four previous appointments. Those two churches were older White congregations in the midst of poor, Hispanic communities. How does one lead a church with a younger demographic through change? Perhaps by developing a compelling vision

and achievable steps. I brought experience leading diverse congregations to embrace new visions for their church. This suburban congregation had a declining demographic of members who moved to Prosper thirty years ago to live a country life. There were people who moved to Prosper about a decade ago to escape the suburbs. Young families were moving to Prosper to have access to better schools and more opportunities for their kids in sports and other extracurricular activities. It is worth noting that couples in their sixties and seventies were moving to Prosper to live near their children and grandchildren. Each group has its own needs and level of openness to change, and I had almost a decade of experience in the challenges and excitement of leading change.

There is also another source of motivation for me to attempt such a project as the one implemented. At Prosper and in Argyle, we experienced racism and prejudice. While there are more than just these examples, I wanted to share them at the beginning of the project in hopes of communicating the level of importance to my family and I. Now, as I have shared, the Family Mission Pilgrimage did not produce enough statistical information to draw clear conclusions from the data alone. The Family Missional Pilgrimage does not statistically show the deeper realities of racism and prejudice in affluent, suburban communities, but my family and I have experienced expressions of racism. My wife, Graciela (Gracie), is Mexican American and my two sons are Hispanic. As a part of this conversation, I, a White middle-class male, would like to share one instance in which I expressed racism and prejudice toward others. There are four examples of racism that I would like to describe. The first episode took place right after Gracie and I moved to our current home in Lantana, Texas. Lantana is an affluent community consisting mostly of White, middle-class families. My wife did not work the

first year we moved to Lantana so that she could offer some consistency and presence for our two sons in wake of the multiple moves we made in a short span of time. When I came home from work one day, she explained to me that a man (Caucasian) had stopped by the house and knocked on the door. My wife answered and when she opened the door he looked at her and asked if the owners of the house were at home because he wanted to talk to them. It took my wife by surprise because her name is on the deed of our home and so she is the owner of the house. Why did the man assume that when she answered the door that she wasn't the owner? Is this something he does to everyone who opens the doors regardless of who they are?

My wife felt that when he saw a Hispanic woman answers the doors during the day she must not be the homeowner. She may be with the cleaning service, a nanny, or the maid, but not the homeowner. This was an instance in which her skin color and features, along with the assumptions and stereotypes of the man led to an incorrect presumption.

It was a painful experience for my wife because she did not feel validated for who she was, but treated in a way that left her feeling diminished. For her, having lived in predominantly affluent suburban communities for several years, she felt the need to prove herself capable in order to overcome people's assumptions and stereotypes because of their limited experience with people from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.

Another example of this for my wife was when we first were moved to Prosper United Methodist Church. On the first or second Sunday we were there, one of the church members approached her and began a conversation. In the conversation, Gracie

mentioned that she spoke Spanish. The member responded, "Yes, I can tell by your accent." My wife was offended by the comment because growing up in Latino communities speaking the way my wife did not mean that she spoke Spanish. That really could have been just the way that she spoke. The assumption that went along with the comment prompted my wife to feel judged and somehow categorized or grouped differently than others.

A third example of my family's experience of racism and bias in our ministry came when we had close family friends come visit us during the day while we were serving at the United Methodist Church in Prosper. The parsonage was right across the street from the church. Many times I would walk back and forth between the two. The church and preschool playground was located on the same side of the church as the parsonage. One morning, while I was working at the church, one of the staff came inside concerned that there was a black man walking around our house. Before the staff person found me, they told another employee. That other staff person walked over to the house to make sure my family was okay. When my wife answered the door, the staff person explained that there was a black male walking around the side of the house and that the staff person wanted to make sure that there were no problems. When the staff person looked through the doorway and past my wife into the living room, the staff person saw the African American young man of which the preschool teacher spoke. It turns out the African American male they saw was doing my wife a favor by taking out the trash from the lunch they had just had. First, there was the assumption that this young man was out of place because he was African American. Second, there was an assumption that because there was a black male walking around the house that there was some inherent

danger. By both employees describing the young man as "black" meant race was a part of what was going on in their mind. When I made it over to the house and inquired about what had happened, my wife was clearly upset that our friends had been insulted. Our friends were frustrated and rolled their eyes and shrugged their shoulders because, for them, this was not an uncommon experience. I went back to the church and confronted the two employees about what had happened. One employee broke into tears because they did not realize their actions to be racist. The other church employee could not even acknowledge that their actions involved some prejudice.

The final example speaks the racism and prejudice I carry in my own heart and mind. Last fall, my wife and I wanted new hardwood floors replaced. We had priced out the job to a couple of companies, but the cost was pretty high. My father-in-law works as a contractor for repair and remodeling, so my wife suggested that we ask him. We did and he recommended someone that he worked with on several previous projects. We set up a time for him to come to the house and look at the floors. When the man arrived at the house, I noticed he was Hispanic. He pulled up in a pretty beat up truck, was wearing worn down clothes and, to me, did not seem like someone that owned their own business. After he left, I raised questions to my wife about whether he would do quality work, or have any warranty on the wood.

After I voiced my concerns several times and my wife tried to reassure me, she sat me down and told me point blank that I was being racist. Because of the way that the man dressed and what he drove, I was making a lot of assumptions that were not true. Also, I was showing bias because I did not trusting my father-in-law and his knowledge about the work that needed to be done and who could do the work. It was a humbling moment

for me because it reminded me that I carry the power of naming in my life and I too have been formed in a context of privilege and make assumptions about people that reflect that context. I do not know if I will ever be free from seeing the world and others with the lens of prejudice, but by being mindful of my inclinations, I hope to be mindful of my thoughts and emotions in hopes of growing through them and loving and seeing people as equals.

When the project did not end as I had hoped, it took the wisdom and insight of my mentors to help me see a bigger picture for what God was doing. What I had thought was a project about the Family Mission Pilgrimage really was a project that names my journey as a missional pastor navigating the success and challenges of doing ministry within the United Methodist Church. As I will elaborate in the Chapter Seven, even though I experience the world from a place of societal privilege, the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church exposed me to feelings of vulnerability and helplessness. The leaders who held responsibility over me made assumptions and framed my hopes and aspirations in terms of their own (or at least of the institution). While this experience was a very painful one for my family and I, by God's grace, there are things that can be celebrated about this five-year journey.

Yet, with all of the practical experience I brought to this project, I realized that there were other contemporary voices that speak to what I was trying to accomplish in my project. In Chapter Two, I will explore these contributions to how mission and serving persons pushed to the edges of our society can build deep relationships that can transform attitudes and stereotypes.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN MINISTRY

The goal of the Family Mission and Pilgrimage is to test whether organizing a pilgrimage to an urban Latino community and building relationships with people from different socio-economic backgrounds can change negative attitudes and prejudices. The pilgrimage took place over a weekend and entailed service projects. The hope was that confronting the fear and assumptions of the pilgrims working with people from different socio-economic backgrounds would open the door for affluent Christians to cease using their cultural power to negatively name and label the lives of their urban neighbors. Further, it was believed that not only would the suburban pilgrims relinquish some of their inherent social power, but also that those who were under-resourced and often disenfranchised would more boldly claim their power to define the meaning of their lives. This kind of mission was designed to release power and enthusiasm into the stagnant and self-focused congregation that would motivate them to serve the poor and to be more open about embracing their well off neighbors with less hesitation.

In this chapter, contemporary voices will be considered in this area of ministry. The range of topics will include pilgrimage, theology, travel, cultural intelligence for short-term missions, perspectives across class, and theological reflection upon affluence in the midst of global poverty. Kwok Pui-lan's argument will be included for post-colonialism in this conversation as well. Her insights speak directly to desired

accomplishments in this project and a central tenet of my ministry, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion*, by Trevor Hudson will be examined, which introduced the idea of pilgrimage. Joerg Rieger's *Traveling,* will be explored which highlights a survey of different forms of travel and some of their social, political, and theological implications. *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural intelligence* by David Livermore will be utilized as a concrete guide to the opportunities and pitfalls of doing short-term missions through the church. Following Livermore, Ruby K. Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* which is a practical guidebook to basic principles for different norms across poverty, middle-class and wealth. Ron Sider's seminal work, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* will be discussed. The first edition was written in the 1970's and was a call for affluent Christians to claim their role in standing with the poor and creating a different kind of community in which poverty could be overcome. Finally, Kwok Pui-lan's book, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* will be evaluated. In this book, Kwok gives her framework for what postcolonial imagination is and the context for its development. She then argues for a feminist theological vision in a postcolonial world and what that means in terms of the Bible, Jesus, culture, and creation.

A Mile in My Shoes

In reviewing a framework to introduce suburban Christians to meaningful interactions with their neighbors from lower socio-economic backgrounds, Trevor Hudson's book, *A Mile in My Shoes* was discovered. The book serves as primer for making a pilgrimage into the daily lives of others and becoming aware of their suffering.

The pilgrim can engage in thoughtful encounter with others in the midst of pain and suffering and open the door of God's transformative grace. Hudson, a South African pastor of a suburban congregation, believes in a tie between spiritual leadership and having a definitive relationship with people who suffer.[1] He raises the question: "Could this be one reason why the transformative grace and caring compassion of Christ seemed so evident in their lives?[2] After visiting Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche community, and listening for hours to the life stories and conversations of community members who were living with severe disabilities, he believes this is the type of experience that others should have.[3] In *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness,* Jean Vanier gives a glimpse of the purpose for this leadership: "In order to break down the walls that separate people we must not hit the walls. We must begin at the bottom. Jesus came to announce good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, liberty to the oppressed, sight to the blind...When this happens, everyone will begin to change."[4]

He hypothesizes that if his church members were given the opportunity to listen and reflect upon a pilgrimage to the places in their local community where people were hurting and suffering from poverty and prejudice, then there could be the chance for transformation.[5] He called this experience the "Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope" and

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[1] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2005), 18.

[2] Ibid., 18.

[3] Ibid., 17.

[4] Stanley Hauerwas, and Jean Vanier, *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 71.

[5] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion,* 17-19.

believed that this intentional awareness can bring balance for Christians. The spiritual the belief exists that organizing and implementing such an endeavor could change the attitudes of his suburban congregants.

The Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope involve several components: encounter, reflection and transformation.[6] The pilgrims encounter the pain and suffering of others. They reflect on the emotions and experiences of their encounter, through scripture and writing out their experiences in order to help articulate issues.[7] Though one can encounter suffering and reflect upon suffering, it is not a given that one will be transformed by it.[8] It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make transformation possible and it is granted as God wills.[9] Articulating this simple method allows people at all levels of spiritual maturity to bring thoughtfulness and attentiveness to their interactions. The method is not only applicable to physical pilgrimages to other places, but also a practice in one's everyday relationships that can yield attentiveness, reflection and transformation.

Hudson acknowledges many people are searching for spiritual direction in their lives. If church members are willing to commit to the disciplined life of a pilgrim, then they can move beyond a superficial, inactive religion to an authentic, substantial faith made real by a fresh and real encounter with the "crucified Christ."[10] For suburban congregations, this means investing in missional pilgrimages that cultivate compassion and offer opportunities that the laity may find attractive and worthwhile. Many people are

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[6] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion,* 20.

[7] Ibid., 21.

[8] Ibid., 20-21.

[9] Ibid., 21-22.

[10] Ibid., 25.

looking to make a difference in the world and for a way to raise their children to value community service. This could offer the church a chance to invite and partner with many of the neighbors moving into the area. The goal is to balance self-love with compassion and a love for one's neighbor.[11]

Hudson describes the type of preparations pilgrims must make. This is more than packing the right clothes and toiletries for the trip. It is entering into the spiritual discipline as a pilgrim, not a tourist. He points out that "countless people today make periodic excursions into the spiritual supermarket in pursuit of a novel offer" but pilgrims "tiptoe upon the holy ground of other people's suffering.[12] The distinction Hudson makes between tourists and pilgrims is important, because some of the suburban families, especially the young, have experienced travel outside of their communities only by being tourists on vacation, for business, or for school. And the only way they have experienced the poor is on their way through their communities to reach their destinations, or as they have been served by the staff of these vacation or business destinations.

First, he calls pilgrims to be mentally focused and present for the experience. Second, they must fight off temptations and distractions and "learn to listen" to others.[13] If they are present and actively listening, they can "notice" the presence and work of God in their neighbors' circumstances.[14] In several interviews, pilgrims mentioned concern about their phones and electronic devices distracting them from what God may want to teach them on this pilgrimage. Hudson points out that, in serving, one can become more

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[11] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion*, 112.

[12] Ibid., 28.

[13] Ibid., 32-35.

[14] Ibid., 36-40.

aware of the realities of the world and one's own community, get in touch with one's own spiritual poverty, and discover the wonderful resources for "compassionate living."[15] This leads him to revisit the importance of reflection to these kinds of transformational experiences. Through journaling, intentional time apart, and sharing one's experiences with others, a pilgrim can cultivate a more reflective character to his or her life.[16]

Hudson steers the reader back to the critical point of his book: if the Christian practices any aspect of developing his or her spiritual life, there should be one common fruit: compassion.[17] Throughout the book, Hudson frames the expression of compassion through a trinity of characteristics: awareness, empathy, and action. Action is one of the anticipated outcomes of this project. The expectation existed that through interaction and relationship building, the pilgrims and members of the Oak Cliff church and local community would nurture a relationship and serve together. Trevor Hudson names one of the key blind spots for the church and many church leaders: cultivating meaningful connections with people who are suffering. Other than a brief reference to the reality of apartheid and suffering in South Africa, he does not give the reader a lot of detail about a particular kind of suffering. Rather, the reader was responsible for learning more about their context, or listening to the stories and realities of the individuals they encountered. The book served more as a primer for initiating relationships based on respect and a set of disciplines one can practice that lead to deeper spirituality, more developed sense of compassion and a foundation for action.

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[15] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion*, 54.

[16] Ibid., 68.

[17] Ibid., 71.

Traveling

In *Traveling,* Joerg Rieger takes a broader look at how mobility influences life experience and relationships across different groups and draws out insights that informs Christians to understand their personal and communal experiences, as well as live out the love of Christ in a world where many people are transient.

He begins his discourse with an opening chapter on "travel, tourism and migration."[18] He explores tourism as a part of life that involves travel and encountering people and experiencing the physical reality of the geography involved in the trip. He takes the concept of tourism mentioned by Trevor Hudson and gives it a clearer definition and its implications for the parties involved in the different facets of tourism. The experience of tourism is different for everyone and can be contingent upon the travelers' socio-economic status, the means of travel, and the destination.[19] The dynamics of tourism not only impact the tourists, but also the places they go. As travel impacts domestic, regional, and international places financially and demographically, resources are redirected. Depending upon who has control of them, the look and culture of that destination can transform to encourage and mimic the dominant cultures' tourists.[20] This is another form of colonialism that is taking place today. Kwok Pui-lan points out it is a form of servitude. Regions and nations that are vacation destinations for the elite of other countries can find it difficult to grow out of that dependent subservient relationship.[21]

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[18] Joerg Rieger, *Traveling: Christian Explorations of Daily Living* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 7.

[19] Ibid., 11-12.

[20] Ibid., 14.

[21] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 153.

This is often an unseen dynamic that can exist on mission trips as well as vacations and should be given serious consideration. Again, one of the hopes for the Family Missional Pilgrimage is that it will help bring affluent pilgrims to an awareness of how these dynamics exist in their personal lives and this can give them space to see what impact it makes on a macro level. In a healthy relationship, there is give and take; each party has power and works together to negotiate that each sides' needs are met. As we will later see in the biblical analysis, Jesus refuses to wield the power at his disposal in his cultural context and by doing so fundamentally changes how we as Christians understand our relationship with each other. Sometimes, that sets us in contradiction to the secular ways of understanding relationships and power. If a suburban church that brings material or financial resources calls a church that has little of those resources, it can produce an uneven relationship in which one church has to cater to the time, place, and requirements of the other to get the resources that are needed. This is not the type of relationship desired between suburban and urban congregations. Many times well-resourced churches unknowingly diminish communities, individuals, and other churches by treating them as object lessons for their own spiritual growth. To push back against that tendency there has to be an intentionality on the part of the church with more socio-economic power to create space to honor and listen to their neighbors even when it is something that they don't want to hear, or cannot understand.

Just as the growth of tourism has helped shape the world, so have other migrations, whether seeking asylum because of persecution, or relocating in search of new economic opportunities. Such travelers are less likely to return home like tourists.[22]

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[22] Joerg Rieger, *Traveling: Christian Explorations of Daily Living*, 22.

The reason for travel has an impact on how people are understood and treated. In the U.S., people who escape political or religious persecution are seen as brave, but those who relocate to escape dire financial straits for their families can be seen negatively and treated as problems. This could have implications for the outcome of the project because a significant percentage of the people in Oak Cliff, approximately one third, immigrated to the U.S. from another country, or have parents, aunts, or uncles who did. Some of the stereotypes and prejudices in the minds of suburban Christians may have to do with immigration. This can create an area of tension that can either reinforce negative stereotypes or create nuance and particularity.

Rieger sees the tourist as one who can represent dominant culture. Tourists usually have financial means and social capital that many do not, they do not have to interact with people and places on their way to their destination if they do not wish to. Also, their destinations can mimic as much of their own culture as they desire. In this type of travel, globalism is a macro expression of domination and neocolonial expression.[23] Migratory travelers on the other hand, often do not have the means or resources to shape their current reality, journey, or destination. There is a greater likelihood they do not even know where their journey will end.[24]

In his second chapter, Rieger turns to the place of travel in the Judeo-Christian tradition. He first points to the Bible as a compilation of books that express the realities of faith and life of migrant people. This has some radical undertones because the Bible is not a reflection of people in power – who could usually afford to be static – but of freed slaves and exiles, the conquered, poor, occupied, and abandoned. In these stories of

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[23] Ibid., 23.

[24] Joerg Rieger, *Traveling: Christian Explorations of Daily Living*, 24.

displacement and wandering, God is a liberator who did not side with those in power but offered a vision of "encouragement and resistance."[25] In the Old Testament and in the New Testament, over and over again, God frees the enslaved, oppressed, and broken. God leads them to the Promised Land, or transforms their lives and relationships in a way that fundamentally reshapes their existence.

The travel through exile that shapes a nation in the Old Testament is refashioned in the life of Jesus and even Paul in the New Testament. The New Testament records Jesus constantly moving between villages and regions, teaching, healing, praying, and engaging his disciples and different people in all different stations of life. His vision of the kingdom of God challenged the religious and ultimately the political powers that ruled. Jesus' message was not always congruent with some of the Messianic expectations that religious leaders and even his own disciples believed. The life and message of Jesus challenged some understandings about the nature of God's redemptive work. One biblical example is when Jesus was walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus had been crucified and the expectations that the disciples had were crushed. As they made their way back to Emmaus, Jesus joined them on the road and reminded them of what God had promised about the Messiah.

For that long walk, they did not recognize Jesus, but when Jesus sat down with them and shared a meal; they knew him. After he vanished, they talked about how Jesus had touched their hearts. It is in the journey of building relationships with strangers that one can meet Christ incarnate in others.

For Rieger, the God who puts people in motion and meets people on the road may not make sense in the current western culture that promotes settling in one place and the

[25] Ibid., 34.

resistance to change.[26] After all, the life of faith in the Judeo-Christian tradition seems to be about location and relocation.[27] At a moment when so many are traveling, rediscovering the mobile nature of God and faith can illuminate how and where God is working in the Twenty First Century, it is a time to free one's theological locus from a geographical place to one situated in living life through some form of an itinerary.[28] While Rieger's point that about the static culture of church is understood, the reality is that middle-class Christians in the West are experiencing an incredible amount of transition in their lives. However, it seems they often have the means to move into communities that are very similar to the ones they are leaving behind and are not willing to remain in communities that are changing demographically in order to experience everyday life, God, and the blessings of a different environment.

In Chapter Three, Rieger talks about vagabonds versus pilgrims. Pilgrimage was once understood as primarily a journey to a place, or destination, at which they expected to encounter the supernatural. Over time, the definitions of sacred and secular have become less distinct, muddying the difference between religious, travel and tourism.[29] Throughout late antiquity up into the Middle Ages, being a pilgrim was a risky endeavor. One could lose one's earthly or spiritual life on the journey. To go on pilgrimage was to reject the powers and reality of one's current situation to discover a new reality – a new perspective by changing location. As one sets out on this journey, especially now, there is an opportunity to experience what it means to push close to the margins of one's

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[26] Joerg Rieger, *Traveling: Christian Explorations of Daily Living*, 44-45.

[27] Ibid., 45.

[28] Ibid., 48.

[29] Joerg Rieger, *Traveling: Christian Explorations of Daily Living*, 49-50.

experience and engage with realities in constant political, economic, and sociological tension. Rieger offers the reader an opportunity to realize just how much travel is a part of life for so many people and to see some of the repercussions of its different types. Whether one is a tourist, migrant worker, or vagabond, there are power dynamics between people on the road and theological implications about God's role for them. For God in both Testaments, travel was about obedience, freedom, transition, and transformation. God was always challenging His people to leave their current position and to strike out for where He was leading them next. While they may have been striving for stability in reaching the Promised Land, returning from exile, or holding on to Jesus, ultimately, the status quo was the redefinition and continual shaping of identity that came from recalibration of culture and relationships due to relocation. As the suburban pilgrims make their way to the urban community of Oak Cliff, making them aware of their resistance to seeing God in a larger context will be important. Their presuppositions in migration to a suburban community are not necessarily bad, but may not be fully formed and understood until they meet their brothers and sisters of different socio-economic realities.

Serving with Eyes Wide Open

In his book, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, David Livermore promotes the importance of "cultural intelligence" when one plans to travel and serve through short-term missions.[30] He tries to accomplish several objectives on his way to making his case for cultivating this

[30] David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 17.

cultural IQ. First he gives an overview of the some of the key global realities that are defining life for some of the populations people travel to see. Then he states some of the issues and challenges in short-term missions. Next he highlights the experiences of short-term missions through the words of people who went on them and the people they served. Finally, he talks about how taking into account these global realities, the actual impact of short-term missions versus motives and one-sided perceptions, can lead people to self-awareness and contextual sensitivity to the people they have committed to serve.[31]

In the first part of *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, Livermore talks about six trends, or "snapshots," that are impacting everyone whether they realize it or not.[32] He speaks to the impact of incredible population. He reviews the disparity between the financial anxiety that middle-class Christians may experience in the West and the harsh poverty and economic insecurity that most of the world knows.[33] Next he turns to the reality of disease, and in particular AIDS, to point out how vulnerable people are and how it can affect the priorities of church in some regions.[34] Some of these factors play into the increased mobility of many regional and global refugees. For Livermore, globalization affects how Christians should engage the world around them. Issues of inequality, just wages, and international commerce in general leave faithful business leaders with serious questions about how their corporate practices reflect their faith.[35] Also, because

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[31] David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, 10.

[32] Ibid., 23.

[33] Ibid., 25.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 26-27.

globalization and its neo-colonial dynamics, the production of materials and resources flow from first-world countries to the rest of the world eroding cultural differences.[36] The second part of Livermore's guide to short-term missions tackles the important topic of six common messages first-world churches use to frame the reasons and goals of mission trips: "Mission Should Be Fun," "Just Do It," "They Don't Fly Planes in India When It Rains," "Just Stick to the Bible and You Can't Go Wrong," "They're So Happy," and "You're Either For Us or Against Us."[37]

In the chapter entitled "Mission Should Be Fun," Livermore asks a tough question: "Is my cross-cultural work driven most by my desire to follow Christ or by my sense of adventure or wanderlust?"[38] Tourism is such a part of American middle-class culture it can be quite easy to carry the same attitudes and behaviors into mission trips. Taking pictures, talking about different foods, and finding good shops for souvenirs can distract groups from representing Christ and seeking reconciliation and hope. It is hard to fight those cultural inclinations when mission companies market the experience as easy, accessible, and fun. When mission groups respond with a "Just Do It" mentality, they can manufacture a sense of urgency for the trip, but forget that the people and the churches they are going to serve were there before they arrived and will be there after they are gone.[39] When groups come in and do not take the time to learn about their context and listen to the wisdom and instruction of the people who live there, it can be a

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[36] David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence,* 28-29.

[37] Ibid., 45-46.

[38] Ibid., 47.

[39] Ibid., 59.

"human-centered" endeavor.[40] In other words, before gathering all of the pertinent information and praying for discernment, groups can just jump and start working. This can do more damage than good.

Being mindful that a short-term mission team is, by definition, only in a context for a short period of time help keep the teams focus on God's time and their part to play, and it also reminds the group that it should be careful of making generalizations about a culture or people from such limited exposure. If one's first flight to India is canceled due to a rainstorm, one might be tempted to say, "They Don't Fly Planes in India When it Rains."[41] Due to globalization, many things such as clothes and electronics can be found all over the world. So, when a Western group makes a trip to another country and sees others who look like they do, it is important to remember that there are deep differences they cannot see from the outside and they may not get a chance to stay long enough to find out what they are.[42]

In Chapter Six, Livermore centers his discussion on how the Bible can be understood and used in ways that do not fit how we are accustomed to dealing with scripture in North America. In "Just Stick to the Bible and You Can't Go Wrong," he cautions the reader to be open to seeing how people in other cultures understand and use scripture – to take a more humble approach to sharing it and not think that our culture has the "right" and "only" way of using biblical models for church. Kwok Pui lan speaks to how different cultures engage the Bible. For those in China and the Far East, it can be

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[40] David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, 59.

[41] Ibid., 67.

[42] Ibid., 68-69.

difficult to accept the Bible as it is presented from Western missionaries because the missionaries treat it as "special revelation."[43] China has wisdom literature that dates back thousands of years and many Chinese will not abandon it or replace it with only the Judeo-Christian writings of the Old and New Testaments. Often, this challenges the biblical models that missionaries often bring to the East.[44]

Next, "They're So Happy" explores how people in the West understand money. Livermore invites the reader to "explore the 'power of generosity" by asking three questions: "Who's 'poor'?... Who decides what the needs are? ... To give or not to give?"[45] These are critical inquiries because they challenge the assumption that the people Westerners label as poor actually see themselves as poor.[46] These questions push back against the notion that people want to be like us. We often decide, based on our culture, what priorities of others need to be addressed. Finally, these questions move the reader to release the power they assume when they enter a missional context and place agency back in the hands of those they meet. The last of the six perspectives is: "You're Either for Us or against Us!" Sometimes, as Americans, we are oblivious to our cultural drive to simplify things. In the church, there are sermons in which preachers boil down scripture and theology into "Seven Steps" to deal with any issue at hand. If mission groups are unconsciously trying to simplify things then they can miss the opportunity to

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[43] David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, 62.

[44] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 62.

[45] David A. Livermore. *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, 91.

[46] Ibid.

learn about the deeper realities of the context and some of the deeper realities of faith.[47] It is worth noting that this need to simplify the complexities of life and culture can create this kind of cultural disconnect in a pastor or church's local community, not just in a different part of the world.

These six perspectives represent challenges not only for short-term mission groups traveling overseas but also for the suburban Christians going on the Family Missional Pilgrimage. The excitement to go and do something new, especially with one's family, can lead one to act more like a tourist with expectations to be met than a disciple ready to face the harsh realities of a new context. Also, it can be tempting if one defines the purpose of the trip to go and help people who are in terrible financial and material need, to go on the trip with a sense of urgency to change people and to change circumstances without listening to the people who are there and learning about the deeper realities of life in Oak Cliff. It could be tempting for people to assume that they understand all of the factors that contribute to the suffering of others. In doing this, they run the risk of not truly listening to people but trying to make what they encounter fit their preconceived notions. Finally, these teachings can help pilgrims ask themselves, "What are we bringing to this experience and what do we think we will receive?" Inviting the pilgrims to consider that people may not want to emulate the pilgrims' lifestyle may be a leverage point to help them name the assumptions and values they are bringing to the trip and might try to project onto the people they have come to meet.

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[47] David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, 100-101.

In the final section of his book, Livermore introduces the concept of "cultural intelligence" or "CQ."[48] By learning cross-culturally, analyzing similarities and differences in different cultures, identifying "cues" in light of them, and interacting "appropriately," one can develop a sensitivity that can help one work and serve cross-culturally.[49] Livermore then walks the reader through each idea, giving questions and suggestions at the end of each chapter to help the reader process and use the information.

Again, challenging the assumptions that the pilgrims will be bringing into the Family Missional Pilgrimage will be paramount. Hudson's book frames being a pilgrim in terms of listening and picking up some of the cues that Livermore is referencing, but being aware of one's presuppositions going into the experience can help one better distinguish between cultural distortion or clarity about different cultural clues. The pilgrims will have only three days in Oak Cliff, perhaps not enough time invested in interpersonal interactions to glean much of the underlying realities in people's lives or in the community itself, but this is a start. It also might be beneficial to have a resident guide from the community to help prepare activities and to also help with any questions the pilgrims may have or debriefing throughout the experience.

A Framework for Understanding Poverty

While we have talked about short-term mission trips and understanding culture, Ruby K. Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* is primarily for educators, businesses and other organizations considered "middle-class" in their culture

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[48] David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, 110.

[49] Ibid., 110-111.

and trying to build relationships with people who are in poverty. In her study on children in poverty, the middle class, or wealth, she notes that the biggest issue is not money but resources.[50] She articulates eight resources that indicate the difference between the three classes:[51] financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, knowledge of hidden rules, and role models.[52] In Chapter Two, she talks about the importance of the tone and style of language people from different socio-economic backgrounds generally use.[53] Because educational culture is middle-class, it is critical to help children identify their "register" and teach them to speak and write in a more formal register.[54] This echoes Livermore's concern about different cultural cues one can name and interpret to gain context and meaning in a relationship or interaction.

In Chapter Three, Payne discusses "Hidden Rules Among Classes."[55] This is an enlightening exploration of the cultural norms among people of certain classes and how important a working knowledge of these norms can be to building relationships and educational achievement.[56] Again, social cues are rich. Payne notes that there are many variations of how people embody and respond to the norms that govern their behavior. One does not want to take Payne's work and reinforce stereotypes. The resource is for teachers and educators to use as a resource or guide in working with children from

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[50] Ruby K. Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Highlands, TX: Aha! Process, 2005), 2-7.

[51] Ibid., 7.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 27.

[55] Ibid., 37.

[56] Ibid.,41.

different socio-economic backgrounds. Payne notes that when addressing different demographics of people that she is really talking about patterns, and "all patterns have exceptions."[57] It is important to note that fluid and dynamic cultures do not always fit into eight measurable resources. The temptation to reduce a child's, or family's experience like this can lead to reductionism and ultimately labeling or objectifying kids. With that being said, her work is for professionals beginning work to work in low-income schools and under-resourced communities. It gives them a foundational start and nuance as they do their work.

In Chapter Four, she deals with defining generational poverty and distinguishing it from situational poverty.[58] This would be something that moves beyond the scope of the Family Missional Weekend but would be helpful if pilgrims return to Oak Cliff and build deeper relationships with people in poverty in their local community.

Chapters Five and Six cover issues of support systems for children. How can a teacher or professional build the type of support network to give children the emotional resources they need to achieve in school? Payne points out that to move a child from the perspective of poverty to the middle class requires people who will support the child by reinforcing the new norms and helping them process the transition.[59] This is critical because often people will lose relationships in one class to move to another class, which can be very difficult. This is also outside the scope of this project, but if the church decided it wanted to begin to walk alongside individuals who wanted to move from poverty to middle class, then this information would be very helpful.

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[57] Ruby K. Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, 3.

[58] Ibid., 48.

[59] Ibid.

Chapter Seven deals with discipline, which Payne breaks into "structure and choice."[60] She invites the reader to list preferred behaviors that increase the child's likelihood of achievement. This list encourages thought about the alternative decisions a child can make in terms of behavior and to prepare for those behaviors so that in the midst of a building a relationship, the child can be redirected to appropriate behaviors.[61] Then she lists possible behaviors and ways to interpret them and engage them using some of the foundational groundwork she has laid for children who come from a context of poverty.[62] Finally, she briefly talks about how the professional can have that conversation in way that is culturally appropriate for the child.[63]

After talking about "Instruction and Improving Achievement" in Chapter Eight, she addresses "Creating Relationships" in Chapter Nine.[64] This chapter is valuable because it frames one way of understanding how to build relationships with people from poverty. Again, this is a generalization, but a place to start the conversation. "A successful relationship occurs when emotional deposits are made to the student, emotional withdrawals are avoided, and students are respected."[65] This is an enormous help to people from the middle class and wealth who have made value judgments about the under-resourced. For the most part, churches operate under the assumption that if you give someone in poverty money, food, housing or transportation, then they will be able to

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[60] Ruby K. Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, 78.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.,79-80.

[63] Ibid., 82-86.

[64] Ibid., 109.

[65] Ibid., 111.

respond with middle-class behaviors. As mentioned earlier, it is hard for affluent Christians traveling to other countries on mission trips to think that the things they value so highly are not things other people would desire.

It takes church people beyond band-aid fixes to deep systemic and cultural challenges and offers them a clear starting place. For poverty, that starting place is in relationships. Without meaningful relationships, all people can do is assume and stereotype others to try to understand their behavior, especially when it is different from theirs. That is the basis of this project. Creating a context for relationships that can serve as a foundation for understanding and transformation for those in poverty and the pilgrims who will come from a middle class context. For affluent Christians, it is the realization of the power they use so freely and many times without knowing it. They can choose to not utilize that power and give space to the less powerful to use their voice to name and articulate their life experience. For the residents of Oak Cliff, change comes with claiming their voice and their God-given ability to claim their lives and give voice to what their lives mean. It is also critical because, ultimately, knowing the resources that people need and giving them that information empowers them to make decisions about whether they want to stay in their current socio-economic context. If they do not, then they can strategize with partners to help find the resources to make the transition to the middle class.

This work also challenges suburban pilgrims to be more conscious about the expectations and values they bring to the pilgrimage. A pilgrim who is self-aware may be able to recognize why their expectations about how someone handles money, deals with romantic relationships, or uses their time may be different from their own reality.

Rich Christians in An Age of Hunger

Ronald Sider argues for Christians in the United States to take seriously their discipleship and commitment to Christ and follow what God teaches and commands in the Bible concerning the poor. He believes that even a small number of generous Christians can start a movement that can change the direction of a world headed to more war, hunger, economic division, and uninhibited market economies.

In Chapter One of his book, Sider attempts to educate his reader about the global economic context in which we live. He tries to give the reader an idea of how it might look to have their life stripped down to poverty, and then explores how countries have been divided into categories based on economic production. While there was little growth in the 1980's and 1990's, there was still economic expansion, but little of it benefited people in the poorest nations in the world.[66] The result of such global inequality is famine.[67] Sider argues that famine is no longer a reality of food insecurity that affects everyone in a country region. Now, just like global economics, it is "redistributed" and only affects the poor in a given place, while the affluent are protected.[68] In such poverty, children pay the highest price. Without access to clean drinking water, schools, healthcare, and other basic resources, children are vulnerable to disease, malnutrition, and brain damage. I had not fully understood how children could be permanently impaired neurologically if they did not get enough protein from their diets as infants. Making sure children have access to nutritious meals growing up is incredibly important. Sider closes

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[66] Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing), 1997, 6.

[67] Ibid., 7.

[68] Ibid., 9.

the chapter by addressing the pressure population growth puts on families and national economies. Empowerment makes a difference in population growth: getting people the food, education, and healthcare they need will impact birthrates. What will it take to get those resources to the people who have the least access to them? Generous Christians can be part of the answer.

In the second chapter of the book, Sider begins to dig into the reality of the "Affluent Minority."[69] In this chapter, he tries to awaken affluent Christians to just how many resources they have at her fingertips. To give perspective, Sider compares how much we spend versus how much we give. His point is that American Christians, and the United States in general, may not be as generous as we once were.[70] As he closes out Chapter Two, Sider highlights two justifications for a self-focused approach to international policy, to ministry and to life: if we share we will die and we need to have nice things to "evangelize the rich."[71] The first justification of "lifeboat ethics" promotes the idea that rich countries will spiral into poverty if they seriously share their resources with poor and developing nations because of uncontrollable population growth.[72] Sider cites data that supports the counter-position that when poor and developing countries can focus resources and development on their under-resourced, birth rates drop and economic stability begins to develop.[73] The second justification for gaining and keeping wealth is

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[69] Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity,* 21.

[70] Ibid., 32.

[71] Ibid., 35.

[72] Ibid., 33.

[73] Ibid., 33-34.

that the wealthy can respond to nice buildings and material amenities.[74] Yet, how much do Christians dare spend on such things when billions of men, women and children are fighting for their lives and losing because they have no partners?[75]

Sider then breaks into the second part of his book. In this unit, he tackles the biblical mandate concerning about the poor and living a more generous lifestyle.[76] He delves into the theological implications for the poor and the rich. Then, he puts forward a philosophy of Economic Fellowship and Economic Justice.[77] By looking back into the Old Testament, Sider bases his economic model on certain tenets of an agrarian society. "In the nonhierarchical, relatively egalitarian society of small farmers depicted above, families possessed resources to earn a living that would have considered reasonable and acceptable, not embarrassingly minimal."[78] By looking at Biblical models of sharing such as Jubilee Year, expectations for tithing and gleaning, and the models of the early church, Sider gives the reader the Biblical resources to consider a different society and economy. He names the inequality in the church that is unequivocally rejected in the scriptures and he invites the church to imagine a new way of living in relationship with others that can more authentically reflect the teaching and expectations of God found in scripture.[79] He considers the implications of scripture, faith and private property before turning to deeper systemic issues that Christians must acknowledge and address to have a global impact on

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[74] Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, 35.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 41.

[77] Ibid., 67.

[78] Ibid., 69.

[79] Ibid., 89-90.

hunger and poverty.[80] In Chapters Seven and Eight, he discusses the causes of poverty and the injustices in the models that now drive global markets.[81]

The final three chapters comprise the final section dealing with how to implement a new set of values and new vision for a more equitable and just global community that can address issues such as hunger, education, and healthcare. He begins by talking about how these values can be made manifest in our personal lives.[82] He addresses how Christians give and how we make personal decisions about how living together with our families and our neighbors.[83] He then moves to talk about how we can live in a Christian community and live out our faith in the church in different ways.[84] In other words, how can the church make decisions differently that reflect the commitment to eradicate poverty and hunger? Finally, Sider goes to a macro level to address how Christians can help change American foreign policy by reframing its role from war and violence to partnership and empowerment.[85] He then points the reader to organizations that already involved in work on international policy.[86] This book does not offer a framework for Christian community development but is formatted as a study guide to help people process the absurdity of the divide between the poor and non-poor. He gives the scriptural and theological basis for Christians to take seriously their individual and

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[80] Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, 91.

[81] Ibid., 125-188.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 189.

[84] Ibid., 192-196.

[85] Ibid., 264-265.

[86] Ibid., 265-269.

collective role in combatting this injustice. Then, he goes through scriptural examples of church, community, and covenant and tries to challenge dynamics that further perpetuate economic injustice. In his analysis, he also tries to give Christians basic theological, political, and economic tools and vocabulary to begin to communicate a different worldview. Just as Trevor Hudson attempts to equip people to hear the stories of their neighbors who are suffering in hopes of creating space for transformation, Sider desires to wake people up to the growing injustices going on around the world and at home. As Livermore gave snapshots to give perspective, so Sider tries to correct what he considers a skewed, apathetic middle-class perspective.

As people return from their pilgrimage, his guidelines for living can give them concrete things they can do to transform their lives into a more conscientious acknowledgment of the incredible disparity between their affluence and the lack of resources so many people in their community and around the world experience.[87]

Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology

In the introduction to her book, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology,* Kwok Pui-lan uses a term, "colonial impulse" to describe the Western proclivity to dominate other civilizations in order to expand the reach of its empire and to secure the resources it needed to finance and support that goal. That colonial impulse still exists as those with power, mainly White, wealthy, educated, heterosexual persons, undermine and subjugate others who do not fit into those privileged demographics. This colonizing drive takes non-Western cultures and seeks to minimize them and fit them under the umbrella

[87] Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, 196-201.

of North American culture. Much of the drive that was explicitly lived out in the colonial initiatives of Europe manifests itself subconsciously through issues like the West's involvement in Middle East treaties protecting oil interests down to buying tribal patterns for one's home at Target. She points out that neocolonialism has been evolving. Even though we still refer to Western values, the colonial impulse has gone global. She summarizes the argument of Michael Hardt and Antonion Negir's book, *Empire:* "...the new emerging empire does not depend on the traditional notion of the state as bounded space, but on building a globalized and decentralized network of international financial institutions, mass media and communication systems, and multinational corporations with flexible labor and capital."[88]

This kind of oppression and colonial drive has been fused into the ethos and practice of organized religion, especially the Christian church. What concerns Kwok Pui-lan and others is the lack of space for women's voices to communicate their own experiences of oppression. The critique of the church and its mutual relationship with imperial agendas is not new, but Kwok celebrates that now women are being allowed to speak for themselves about their experiences of subjugation and silence in the shadow of the church and empire.[89] In this book, she wants to elaborate on her understanding of postcolonial feminism and then to expose emerging fault lines of thought that are bringing nuance and insight to the larger conversation about theology and the church.[90] The driving question behind what she is attempting to accomplish is a question that

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[88] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 19.

[89] Ibid., 30.

[90] Ibid., 7.

resonates with my experience and my passion: "How do postcolonial intellectuals begin the process of decolonization of the mind and soul?"[91] She gives voice to personal struggles as a White, privileged male in the West living in an interreligious and interracial family and leading an institution that still embodies "colonized" values in how it thinks and operates as a church. As an intellectual religious leader, the project was fashioned to test whether merging the theological framework of the means of grace with the discipline pilgrimage could support the decolonizing effort, specifically addressing the power of naming so often perpetuated by the affluent and privileged of Western society. Kwok seeks "to trace the itinerary of how the mind, 'imagines' for without the power of imagination we cannot envision a different past, present, and future."[92]

In Chapter One, she endeavors to unleash the power of postcolonial feminist imagination in hopes of rethinking the past, interpreting a more authentic present, and visioning a more inclusive future. She wants to uncover the realities that women have faced throughout history. That remembering takes place in different ways and has to fight influences of imperialism that seek to drown out cultural different or to wipe out different perspectives on events and circumstances.[93] For Kwok, developing the "historical imagination" is not abstract but practical and concrete. For women that have been abused, or violated, their memories are in, or on, their bodies; they experienced embodied memories.[94] The second pillar of postcolonial imagination is supported by dialogical

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[91] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 30.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 36-37.

[94] Ibid., 37.

imagination.[95] Instead of the Bible standing on its own, when brought into the diverse and nuanced reality of the Asian context, Kwok desires for their to be dialogue between the multi-layered realities of the Bible and the multi-layered reality of what it means to be Asian.[96] Often, culture is treated as all encompassing and stable, but that is not the case. She reminds the reader that the use of pilgrimage as a helpful metaphor: "In a more religious vein, there is the time-honored notion of pilgrimage, conceived as either an outward or upward journey, wherein one leaves the local and the familiar to search for the sacred, the global, or the divine."[97] Her use of pilgrimage complements the attempted accomplishments through the Family Missional Pilgrimage: Sending pilgrims on a journey in which they encounter God and their neighbors in Oak Cliff in a way that is transformational. She ends the chapter discussing the diasporic imagination involved in postcolonial work. Because of the incredible mobile nature of our global community individuals, people groups, and countries are on the move. People who have not experienced this kind of movement, forced or voluntary, do not have the capacity to speak to that experience with authenticity.[98] Postcolonial imagination demands that the voices of those in diaspora be heard and courage for those in diaspora to speak to their life experience.

In Chapter Two, Kwok Pui-lan addresses four sources of wisdom from which postcolonial thinkers and writes can draw: women's experience, scripture, tradition, and reason. Women's experience is a defining criterion for feminist theology. It sets it a part

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[95] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 38.

[96] Ibid., 38-39.

[97] Ibid., 44.

[98] Ibid., 47.

from the andro-centric worldview that dominates the West. She traces the differences of women's experiences in the world: White, Black, and Asian to name a few. Not only must women's experience stand against andro-centric bias, but it also must originate from women. For so long, men have spoken about women's experience, but because they are not women, they cannot speak from that experience. The different voices provide a rich interplay of interpretation and experience. They also create dialogue, which holds everyone accountable to their experience of oppression, but also their role in perpetuating it.[99] Scripture is another source of wisdom for postcolonial feminist theology, but it must be handled carefully. The Bible was shaped and formed in the crucible of oppression and liberation and must be read with a hermeneutic of suspicion for it function from a liberative praxis.[100] Partially, the role that the Bible has served has been that of a tool that imperialism has wielded as missionaries moved through foreign lands. It was presented by missionaries to people with embedded cultural androcentric bias and was interpreted in ways that oppressed women in certain contexts by instilling social and cultural expectations that were not part of their indigenous cultures.[101] Yet, the Bible has also served as a resource for hope and freedom. In the United States slaves such as Harriet Tubman used traditions like Moses and the Exodus of the Hebrews as a foundation to write songs, strategize escapes, and communicate among the slave populations at the time.

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[99] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 60.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., 61-62.

Tradition is the third source of wisdom that Kwok delineates and she suggests that confronting traditions is vital because "tradition defines the memory of the church."[102] As with scripture, tradition has served an androcentric agenda and because so much of the church tradition has come from the Middle Ages and later, it is Eurocentric. Tradition has to be interrogated against its European male bias and set in a more diverse and multicultural context.[103] Part of this conversation about tradition means that other sources have to be brought to bear other than what is considered tradition in the Christian church. Kwok speaks of legends, oral traditions, and other sources that can broaden the context and speak to the multiplicity of sources for wisdom in the postcolonial endeavor.[104] Reason is the last source listed and it is one that historically has not been attributed to women. Kwok points out that "as women, they were considered emotional and irrational compared to men."[105] As Christianity spread to places outside of the West, the belief that women were uncivilized and needed the guidance of White men continue to be imposed on the people being colonized.[106] Kwok explores the way in which we know things and the just how the way we experience the world and think about the world has been shaped by the imperial impulse and its androcentric dynamic. For postcolonial thinkers, there must exist a sense of self-awareness in how we engage the world and explain the world. In part because our voices do not speak from the experience of many that have been disenfranchised or oppressed. Also, we have to be careful not to let our desire to address

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[102] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology,* 66.

[103] Ibid., 67.

[104] Ibid., 68-69.

[105] Ibid., 70.

[106] Ibid., 70-71.

the issues and categories of modernity and postmodernity limit our imagination to the categories created by colonialism.[107]

In her third chapter, Kwok address important connections between post colonialism and how it confronts the Bible, gender in early Christianity, and feminism and anti-Judaism. The Bible has been tool of colonialism for centuries. It has been used to oppress and subvert cultures for the sake of the imperial will, but feminist critics have been able to take this tool for oppression and turn it into a means of resistance and liberation.[108] Some of this happens through approaching the Bible with different methods and modes of interpretations.[109] Also, instead of treating the Bible as one voice with one interpretation, allowing voices from others, such as women from in the Third World, to interpret the Bible is critical.[110] The connection of postcolonial criticism and gender in early Christianity is important because the way in which New Testament studies have, until recently, tended to be approached from an androcentric perspective often problematically coupled with a lack of consistency in addressing the presence and influence of the Roman Empire and imperialism cannot be left as is.[111] Kwok wants to center the conversation back on the lineage of women in the development of the early church.[112] It is also important that the reader consider not only the role of women in the development of the early church and how that changed over time, but also how gender,

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[107] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 73-75.

[108] Ibid., 77.

[109] Ibid., 78-79.

[110] Ibid., 84-85.

[111] Ibid.,, 85.

[112] Ibid., 86.

ethnicity, and socio-economic status converge and impact the role of women and the story of the church. Finally, Kwok addresses the role of feminism and anti-Semitism in postcolonial criticism. Here she warns postcolonial feminists to be wary of how they engage the Bible because of the presence of some material that is anti-Judaic in tone in the predominant Christian worldview and how that outlook expresses itself in a variety of settings.[113] Learning more about the Jewish past, including Jewish participation in biblical and Christian conversations, as well as perpetuating negative stereotypes of Jews as a whole, are just a few of the ways that postcolonial feminist scholars can subvert anti-Semitism.[114]

In Chapter Four, "Finding Ruth a Home," Kwok uses the book of Ruth to explore the concept of "home" from a postcolonial feminist perspective. She uses three entry points to critique the "stable, warm, and cozy" image of home presented in the West versus the transient, painful, and fluid reality that many in the world experience as home: kinship, patriarchal household, and the hospitality of strangers.[115] The role of Ruth in the context of kinship is one that objectifies her, her sexuality, and as a limit against which to maintain racial purity for the purpose of maintaining the patrilineal integrity of the family and for the political integrity of the empire.[116] Having the clarity to name these underlying motives for the story and its traditional interpretation, help to identify name areas of critique that can resist the androcentric reality of the text and create space for women to push back against being objectified for sake of male-power and the agenda of

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[113] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 93.

[114] Ibid., 98.

[115] Ibid., 102.

[116] Ibid., 107.

the empire.[117] The discussion of kinship brings the idea of the patriarchal home into focus. Part of the challenge for postcolonial feminist critics is that the story is not one of resistance against patriarchy or heterosexual bias.[118] While literary criticism and other methods represent tools that can help better develop the female characters and their realities in the book of Ruth, the "happy ending" at the end of the book is an obstacle because it masks some of the deeper issues that exist in same-gender, multi-ethnic relationships.[119] Also, in Kwok's analysis unpacking the theme of hospitality for strangers helps bring nuance what is sometimes accepted as being universal. How Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz treat one another and others in the story show an openness and compassion that is praiseworthy in the story.[120] Yet, what about Orpah who chooses to return to her people and their gods? What about Ruth? The hospitality of Israel is not one of universal acceptance, but seems to be one in which those who are willing to assimilate and serve Israel's God is accepted.[121] What does it mean to be a stranger and how is one accepted and belonging defined? These are important concepts that must be questioned when one thinks about hospitality and the expectations that are often coupled with the promise of welcome and inclusion.

In the last section of Chapter Four, Kwok enlists several contemporary issues to further scrutinize the concept of home. The first theme she engages is the relationship between home and the violence often associated with identity formation. She uses Regina

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[117] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 107.

[118] Ibid., 108.

[119] Ibid., 111.

[120] Ibid., 111.

[121] Ibid., 112.

Schwartz's insights as a foundation for inquiry about how monotheism, covenant, and community have been used by imperialism and colonialism to justify violence and displacement.[122] There is a sense by Schwartz that concerns surrounding scarcity may be behind the priority of belonging in the book of Ruth. She cites the famine that Ruth is attempting to escape and that Boaz is not really accepting a stranger, but looking after his own familial interests since Ruth is his kin.[123] What is intriguing for Kwok is how Schwartz offers alternative methods of engaging the text that can diffuse or lessen the violence that is often inflicted in the name of belonging and identity formation.[124] Then, the chapter turns to address the relationship of home, women's sexuality, and the "Pocahontas Perplex." This section has to do with dismantling "sexual stereotypes of the Other and then assimilating the Other into the same."[125] Here Kwok references Laura Donaldson's reading of Ruth and comparison of the legend of John Smith and Pocahontas. In the story of Pocahontas, she leaves her tribe and takes on a subservient, quiet place under John Smith and in European ethics, expectations, and culture.[126] Orpah is the one that rejects this option. In Donaldson's view, Salmon and Boaz take the role of John Smith and it is Ruth who turns her back on her people and because of fidelity to Boaz and his God that God's people prevail.[127] For Donaldson and for Kwok Pui-lan, the scripture must be explored by expanding the scope of the issues being considered, issues

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[122] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 114.

[123] Ibid., 115.

[124] Ibid., 116.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 118.

[127] Ibid.

like "race, class, culture, colonialism, conquest, and slavery."[128] It is important to pay attention to relatively minor characters like Orpah and why she is forgotten in the story.[129] Next, "Native people must take response-ability for their own reading and interface with the biblical text with their own history and struggles."[130] Finally, the different cultures and layers of specificity that address certain circumstances must be taken into account in the reading of the Bible and by doing this there is a richness of meaning that can be unleashed for the readers and interpreters.[131] Kwok closes out the chapter by noting the shift in method when it comes to interrogating the biblical text. For several decades, the predominant way to engage the Bible has been through the historical critical method, but now there is a greater focus on the "cultural and ideological" consistency of scripture. This is important because this view allows other texts and perspectives to be brought alongside the Bible and subvert the "hegemonic claims and that will make room for others to share the planet as their 'home.'"[132]

Chapter Five begins the second part of Kwok's work and in this part her focus is on articulating a postcolonial feminist theological vision. Chapter Five serves to flesh out what postcolonial feminist theology is and how one participates in its work. Postcolonial feminist theology is the active and "oppositional stance" of the "colonized Other, whose text and context have been shaped by the colonial process, and who experiences become

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[128] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*,

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid., 119.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.,, 121.

the focal point of postcolonial literature and narration."[133] For Kwok, there may be pro-feminist men, but the origins of postcolonial feminism are "former female colonizers" and "former colonized women."[134] For these different perspectives there will be "different entry points, priorities of issues, accents, and inflections." [135] The task itself circles three points: resignifying gender, requeering sexuality, and redoing theology.

By resignifying gender, she wants to push the limits of White feminist theology to develop a deeper understanding of feminism. She challenges the early White feminist writers and their "binary" conceptualization of gender "as if gender is stable and fixed, not open to question and negotiation."[136] She then edges deeper and questions the prioritization of gender oppression over other forms of oppression such as "racism, classism, heterosexism, and colonialism" by White feminist thinkers.[137] By doing this, it seems that Kwok wants to free gender from any prioritization or false dichotomy that would limit women in any context of colonization and oppression from being able to share their story and speak to their own individual and valuable experience. The second point of postcolonial feminist theology is "requeering sexuality." Her goal is to name the reality of heterosexualism in feminist theology and the bias that exists between gender and sexuality and to debunk the myths and stereotypes that persist in a multitude of contexts and expressed in a variety of ways.[138] She ends the chapter talking about the

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[133] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 126.

[134] Ibid., 127.

[135] Ibid., 127.

[136] Ibid., 129.

[137] Ibid., 131.

[138] Ibid., 137.

critical work of "redoing theology."[139] In the postcolonial context that means: "examining "theological symbols" used to promote colonialism, the reimagining of religious difference, and the need to consideration of how "marginalized women" are facing the catastrophic impact of humanity on the environment.[140]

Chapter Six addresses the necessity for feminist theology to develop a more robust political theology. Political theology developed from the Third World in response to the imperialistic force of the United States and Europe. Until recently this has been an androcentric endeavor, but, now women are called to develop a political theology that is responsive to the particular issues that arise from their experience and fosters a "theological vision of the hope and aspiration of women."[141] Kwok highlights how considering the different sociopolitical contexts in the Third World illuminate the presence of, and opportunity to a fuller, feminist political theology. She then reflects upon the interrelatedness of feminism, colonialism, and Christianity.[142] She explains the dynamics of these relationships this way: "The encounter between Western colonizing culture and indigenous cultures involved thorny questions pertaining to women's roles and female sexuality, notably veiling, polygamy, child marriage, foot binding, and sati."[143] In order to combat the results of the fusion of Christianity and colonialism, she offers several methods for feminist political theology: "questioning sexual theology, unmasking the impact of monotheistic and androcentric theology on religiously

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[139] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 144.

[140] Ibid., 144-145.

[141] Ibid., 150-151.

[142] Ibid., 153.

[143] Ibid., 154.

pluralistic cultures, and ideological critique of Christian symbolism."[144] Her third point of inquiry is cultural politics. Culture is often referred to as if it is universal for whatever group to which it is being used. It isn't and being able to identify and resist that notion is critical to dislodge the power and privilege that conceptualization affords a small group of people and it creates space for women's voices to be heard and their experiences to be lifted up.[145] Since the Bible and theology are seen as "cultural and ideological products" this same effort must be reinforced when it comes to engaging Christian tradition and scripture.[146] Finally, Kwok speaks to the harsh realities women face in the Third World in response to "ecojustice." Exploitation is not only about human resources but natural resources as well.[147] She discusses how women are left vulnerable because of profit-hungry global conglomerates and the persisting economic and political dynamics that keep Third World countries in servitude to Western countries.[148] Chapter Six reminds the reader that while women in the first world can afford to focus on gender oppression while women in the Third World have to develop a deeper political theology to engage issues of physical survival in the midst of dire physical circumstances.[149]

In Chapter Seven, "Engendering Christ," Kwok digs into intersection of postcolonial feminism and Christology. The emphasis of this chapter looking at how the symbol of Christ can be converted from a symbol that has been used to dominate and

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[144] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 154.

[145] Ibid.,159.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid., 162.

[148] Ibid., 163.

[149] Ibid., 166.

oppress so many to a symbol of hope and liberation.[150] The symbol of Jesus in dominant Christianity has been the vehicle for oppression and the colonizing effort of regimes since the Constantine and must be pushed to the limits of socially acceptable Christology. Due to the power behind the symbol of Christ that has been used by the church, the symbol of Christ must undergo vigorous rethinking. Part of that discussion in the postcolonial mindset means framing Jesus as a hybrid symbol. Maybe the most common example of Jesus' hybridity is that of Jesus Christ. The Christ symbol is understood in the particular of the Jesus of Nazareth and the universality of Christ the Messiah. Kwok believes that it is in the tension of these two understandings that many people, not just the dominant regimes, can find meaning and a place to negotiate what it means for their culture to engage the reality of God. Unfortunately, what has happened is that as the Christ symbol was absorbed into the imperial philosophy and Christ became only associated with the male-centered, Euro-centric dominant regime. After introducing the idea of the hybridity of Jesus Christ, she presents five different marginalized images of Jesus Christ: The Black Christ, The Corn Mother, The Feminine Shakti, The Theological Transvestite, and the Jesus as Bi/Christ. Each image pushes the limits of what has been generally accepted as orthodox Christology. In pushing these theological limits Kwok names new avenues for liberating Christ from being used as oppressive instrument of empires and creating avenues for more voices, languages, and experiences to meaningfully engage this symbol of hope and liberation. The last section of the Chapter Seven deals with "Critical Observation and Reflections."

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[150] Ibid., 168.

Kwok finishes out the chapter with five summarizing observations. First, she reminds the reader that the hybridization of Jesus Christ has existed for a very long time. No one definition of hybridization should take the place over any other.[151] Different groups, cultures, and contexts ought to have access to this symbol and bring their different perspectives and voices to the Christ symbol to find meaning.[152] Second, as differing images of hybridization in the late Twentieth Century, different cultures were developed and communicated different political and cultural theologies that spoke to their particular experiences as oppressed peoples.[153] These hybrid interpretations resist the domineering Christologies and images that devalued and diminished colonized peoples.[154] Next, she addresses the conflicting reality of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion. How could the suffering symbol of Christ be helpful for women who have suffered such tremendous oppression and violence?[155] The suffering cannot be "spiritualized" because it can lead to covering up hidden and oppressive agendas against women, but maybe with continued attention there could be resources for wholeness and healing for women in a multitude of contexts.[156] In her fourth insight, she revisits the importance of not promoting anti-Semitic ideology as one works through Christology. One of the most common ways that can happen is through continuing to see the superficial rhetorical

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[151] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 182.

[152] Ibid., 182.

[153] Ibid., 182-183.

[154] Ibid., 183.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., 184.

contrasts set up in the New Testament as a substantive depiction of the Jewish people.[157] Finally, she speaks to the ways in which having more intentional and boundary-pushing conversations about human sexuality and Christ can unearth relationships between our deepest intimate desires and the hope and redemption incarnated in Christ.[158]

In Chapter Eight, Kwok identifies the power of Christianity has exercised throughout the world as an accomplice in the colonizing agenda and how because of Christianity's preferred place its assumptions, categories, and naming have been considered or assumed in defining other realities and religions.[159] Due to the way that the theological work has been done, religions always seem to be ranked and Christianity seems to always be at the top of the list.[160] This has been a theological blind spot for many American theologians over the last two hundred years.

In light of her argument, she tackles three critical points: first, she reviews the relationship between theology and comparative religion in the nineteenth century; second, she evaluates the current discourse on pluralism; and, finally, Pui-lan reframes the discourse by offering a postcolonial theological perspective of religious difference.[161] Even though the construction of the word "religion" and the meaning behind it unfairly bias Christianity, it has become such a part of Western consciousness that it cannot be undone.[162] Her concern is that the search for "truth" in the study of comparative religions

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[157] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 184.

[158] Ibid.,184-185.

[159] Ibid., 187-188.

[160] Ibid., 204.

[161] Ibid., 189-208.

[162] Ibid., 204.

overshadows the needs of oppressed women.[163] Religious difference allows the discourse to move beyond the search for abstract truth, and impact the concrete social and cultural realities in which the majority of women live in the Twenty First Century.[164]

In the final chapter of *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, Kwok Pui-lan explores how the role of women in "mending creation": the work of women in relationship to the environment and globalization's impact.[165] First, she talks about how colonialism impacted the environments of the colonizers discovered and conquered. They did this by introducing new plant life and by displacing people from all over the world for the sake of their endeavors.[166] Colonizers also, for the sake of trade, economic development, and the amassing of wealth, exported natural resources from regions and people all over the world.[167] Women paid a heavy price and were some of the most vulnerable in this form of economic colonialism. They were raped and used to breed. They were brutalized and blamed for the abuse and objectification they experienced. Their social roles and power they shared in their families was taken.[168] She also addresses green imperialism: the reality that natural resources a controlled, manipulated, regulated by large, economic superpowers with very little voice from local communities and women that tend to manage the resources of these communities and their families.[169]

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[163] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 204-205.

[164] Ibid., 208.

[165] Ibid., 210-211.

[166] Ibid., 212-213.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Ibid., 212-213.

[169] Ibid., 215-216.

In the second part of the chapter, Kwok gives an overview of different streams of feminist thought in relationship to women and nature. She speaks to complex ways in which women in different social and ethnic locations see and understand their relationship with nature. For example, because in an androcentric culture women are associated with nature and nature is considered irrational and base. Women must redefine false dichotomies and worldviews that support the colonizing impulse. For women located in the West, how do they reimagine who they are and their relationship with nature and with others in a way that leads to liberating social action? These are the types of questions that help women interrogate the assumptions and structures that have perpetuated their oppression and subjugation. Finally, she addresses the relationship between nature, conquest, slavery and colonization. In this part of her conversation, Kwok calls the reader out of the abstract conversation about culture and to focus on the realities that impact the physical bodies of women.[170] White bodies are seen, thought of, and treated differently than bodies of different colors. Native American women's bodies were beaten, raped, and sterilized to help the colonizers achieve their economic, political, religious, and cultural goals.[171] The relationship with nature that indigenous women and women of color have is multifaceted and fluid. Yet, there is hope and that hope comes in the resources to survive, to work in solidarity with women and pro-feminist men across social locations, and to cultivate not only new ways of understanding the world, but also tangible and physical ways of changing it.

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[170] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonialism Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 223.

[171] Ibid., 224.

Conclusion

It is hard to realize how disconnected suburbanites are from their under-resourced neighbors, in their own communities and around the world. This disconnection has very little to do with geography: in almost every town, suburb, rural area, or urban center there are people who live on the margins. Yet, it is God who by His prophetic vision in Isaiah calls Christians to not lose touch or concern with the poor. It is that disconnect from the under-resourced that leads one to a disconnect from God. It leads people to use labels and generalizations to describe the lives and character of people and cultures they do not know or understand. The use of pilgrimage offered by Trevor Hudson gives Christians with more resources a practice that can frame meaningful attempts to connect with people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Not only do deep relationships shape how we think about our neighbors, but they also shape how we think about God and what God is doing in the world. Joerg Rieger talks about what traveling in its various forms means for the people who are on the road, the people they meet, and God. The way we travel can impact our expectations and how we treat others. It is critical to take the time to process what it means to encounter God in places like Oak Cliff and to take it a step further and ask: How does the God I believe in through my context in Prosper relate to the God of our neighbors in Oak Cliff?

David Livermore reminds the reader to be aware of the global realities that so many people face throughout the globe. When North American Christians travel on mission they must bring an awareness of how different their day-to-day reality often is from their global neighbors. By keeping that larger global reality in mind, short-term missionaries can be more realistic about what they are able to accomplish on a short-term

mission trip. Avoiding the unrealistic and unbiblical rhetoric churches and mission organizations often use to promote trips can also maintain a healthier perspective.

For suburban pilgrims, being realistic about their role in going to Oak Cliff is important. It could be tempting to come down and think that the church members and community members of Oak Cliff need them to come because of what they have or what they can do. This could set the pilgrims up not only to have the wrong mentality as they approach the trip but also to miss out on what they have to learn. That kind of self-awareness is a key to what Ruby K. Payne communicates to teachers and business professionals as they get involved with children or adults from poverty. Understanding some of the general patterns, values and social cues that exist for people in poverty, middle class, and wealth can help build relationships that can lead to mutual respect and achievement. While every person is different and would not fit all of the generalizations, such generalizations are another way to begin to find common ground between people from different socio-economic realities.

Ron Sider takes an exhaustive look at just how different the middle-class American reality is from the billions of people all over the world. He believes that Christians have a role in alleviating hunger and extreme poverty but it is going to take converting affluent Christians to the biblical mandate to care for the oppressed and disenfranchised. This means not only changing how you live your personal life, but how you consider social policy and global economic policy. It takes getting off the sidelines and getting involved. For the pilgrims, there are many ways for our personal lives to reflect our commitment to partner with the under-resourced and to shape a different future than the one that exists now.

Kwok Pui-lan's exploration of postcolonial feminism extends and fills in the arguments of Livermore and Rieger and serves as the primary context for this project. Incorporating the means of grace and pilgrimage in this project is about leverage the postcolonial imagination in the pilgrims and in the residents of Oak Cliff. It will be can opportunity for them to explore what it means to bring different cultural and gender views to bear on life experiences, scripture, tradition, and reason. She traces the nuances of oppression and subjugation in ways that help resist the assumed universal worldview of the affluent and creates space for everyone to be held mutually accountable by the voices of both the privileged and the oppressed at the same table.

In conclusion, given Trevor Hudson's framework for the pilgrimage and the tools to cultivate self-awareness and a sensitivity to the cultural and physical character of the Oak Cliff church and community, I can construct a project that can test his hypothesis. Also, using the suggested practices in Livermore, Payne, and Sider, I can offer activities and questions that can help the pilgrims become more aware of their attitudes and stereotypes and make relational contacts that can help erase those attitudes. Now, it is time to consider what biblical, historical, and theological foundations can inform the project.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the Family Missional Pilgrimage was to create a process that can begin to "decolonize" the hearts, minds, and souls of individuals who have been shaped by the influence and privilege of colonialism. The project was assembled to address the power privileged people have to name and objectify others. Some marginalizing factors may be ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or economic status, among other factors. The pilgrimage was an opportunity for those who live under the power and influence of others to claim and name who they see themselves to be and what their lives mean. From the Wesleyan perspective, building relationships like this can be a "means of grace" through which God can transform the hearts and minds of pilgrims as well as those whom they meet along the way. In this sense, the means of grace can serve a channel for God's sanctifying grace that allows them to grow in God's likeness. In this chapter, themes such as biblical, historical, and theological context will be explored.

First, the two biblical examples of naming: Genesis 32 and Mark 7. In Genesis 32, Jacob encounters God on the road to confronting his brother, Esau. In the ensuing struggle, God renames Jacob, Israel. This name changing represents a pivot in Jacob's

life and alters the way he relates to God and to others. In Mark 7, a Syrophoenician woman cries out to Jesus to have mercy and free her daughter from the demon that possesses her. Jesus responds by insinuating that she was a dog and not fulfilling her request. However, the woman does not let Jesus' slur deter her. She proceeds to leverage the insult in her favor and Jesus in turn heals her daughter. These two stories shed light on the power of naming and offers potential alternatives pilgrims could have utilized in their interactions with the residents of Oak Cliff on the Family Missional Pilgrimage. They could then bring those social and relational tools back to Prosper and use them in their efforts to reach their affluent neighbors and to build relationships with other community members from different socio-economic backgrounds.

In the section on historical foundations, the power of pilgrimage will be addressed through the lens of Constantine's mother, Helena, and her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the Fourth Century. In her travel to the eastern region of the Roman Empire, she embodied the desire to find spiritual enlightenment, but also wielded the imperial power of her son's authority. Modern affluent Christians carry similar dynamics in their travels and missional endeavors. They anticipate having a spiritual encounter and they also exert power because of the benefits and privilege they receive from a society built upon colonialism and empire.

Finally, in the theological foundations section, John Wesley's interpretation of the "means of grace" will be used to discuss how building relationships across socio-economic differences can bring personal, relational and societal transformation by transforming our identity to be more like Christ. After defining the Wesleyan means of grace Jason Vickers and Joerg Rieger work will be used to interpret the means of grace to

address the current reality of the church and reframe its future direction. Then, the "means of grace" in light of Kwok Pui-Lan's will be expanded upon as it relates to concerns about the continuing influence of colonialism and Traci West's concept of Christian social ethics as an example of how to build transformational relationships across socio-economic contexts. The final section of this chapter will be a summary of lessons learned in this foundational work. Those lesson learned will be applied to the impactful themes within the Family Missional Pilgrimage.

Biblical Foundations

"The Bible can be used as an instrument of domination, but it can also be interpreted to work for our liberation.[1] Names, titles, and labels were important in biblical times and they are important today. Names contain, and embody, explicit and implicit meaning; therefore, being able to name something, or someone, shows power. One can see this in Genesis the First Chapter when God shows authority by speaking creation into being and naming the foundational things of creation, including Adam and Eve. He, then, gives Adam authority to name other things in creation as well. At the center of this project is the desire to create relationships among people from different socio-economic backgrounds in hopes that affluent Christians will recognize, withhold, or relinquish the power society awards them to name and label others and their respective reality. The ripple of effect of such personal and relational transformation is to make a societal difference by destabilizing systems of oppression based on mutuality and respect instead of oppression and fear. Also, in the creation of these relationships, the space and

[1] Kwok Pui-lan, "Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World," *Semeia* 47 (1989): 26.

mutuality that is birthed can empower people who are systematically disenfranchised to be more assertive in claiming their right to give name and language to their lives and their experience.

Old Testament Foundation

The story of Jacob wrestling with God at the stream of Jabbok in Genesis 32:22-32 stands in parallel to another story of Jacob and God found in Genesis 28:10-22. In Genesis 28, Jacob is running away from the wrath of his brother and the consequences of deceiving Esau.[2] Jacob stays alone and encountered God in a dream. In the dream God stands beside Jacob and gives him a blessing of sorts by assuring Jacob that he would not abandon him. In Genesis 32, Jacob asks for a blessing in the midst of wrestling with God and in anticipation of meeting his brother Esau. In light of these two passages, one gets a glimpse of Jesse Long's argument that the theme of struggle and wrestling winds its way through Genesis 25 to Genesis 32.[3] He cites Jacob and Esau's struggle in the womb, their issues with birthright and blessing, Isaac's disagreement and confrontation with the herdsmen of Gerar over water, and even Rachel and Leah have their own strife.[4] The theme is woven into Jacob's name (to grasp at the heel) by the author of Genesis. The estranged relationship Jacob has with his brother, Esau, serves as the backdrop for this portion of the narrative.

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[2] Robert B. Coote, "The Book of Genesis," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 1:541.

[3] Jesse Long, "Wrestling with God to Win: A Literary Reading of the Story of Jacob at the Jabbok in Honor of Don Williams," SCJ 15 (Spring, 2012): 51.

[4] Ibid., 52.

In Genesis 32, Jacob is preparing to resettle in the Promised Land, but in order to do so he has to reconcile with Esau. Jacob sends word to Esau that he is going to meet him. Jacob finds out that in response Esau is coming with several hundred men. Jacob wants peace, but in the back of his mind he is thinking about the state of he and his brother's relationship the last time they were together. At that time, Esau pledged to kill him. Remembering Esau's vow, it is possible, that even with Jacob's desire to be obedient to God, he has a considerable level of trepidation in facing his brother. In verses 9-12, Jacob attempts to acknowledge his unworthiness in an act of contrition. He prays, "I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies." Again, a reflection of his fear of the retribution he is anticipating from his brother. At the end of the prayer, he reminds God that the reason God should intervene is because of the promise that God made to him: "Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children." It seems that Jacob wants to make sure God sees value in guarding his life and so he adds the "mothers with the children" at the end and then reminds God of the promise that God made to "make you offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number." It is hard not to see Jacob's preoccupation with his own self-preservation show through his comments and even his actions.

After the prayer, Jacob divides up his things and sends everyone across the river ahead of him. His hope is that if Esau has come to kill them, then dividing them up will give one of the groups a chance to escape. As Jacob lags behind, one can see that he

himself wants to maximize his chance for escape. Also, the companies that he sends ahead are meant as gifts to appease his brother and to cool any enmity that Esau may have against his brother.

One of the realities of colonialism and empire is to maintain control and the preservation of status and power. The giving of gifts has been a common strategy to appease or diffuse anger or negative sentiment resulting from unjust policies or practices, comparable to the land given to the Native Americans of North America and restitution given in broken relationships. Yet, no matter what the material gift, or symbolic gesture, they cannot replace the recognition and naming of the sin followed by an authentic desire for reconciliation communicated through appropriate behaviors. This is another case where one cannot read the passage and not name and reject the Bible's silence about Jacob using women and children as pawns in his plan to appease his brother in order to save his life. It is my hope that the journey that affluent pilgrims begin with the Family Missional Pilgrimage can be a step toward individuals and families beginning to recognize the violence perpetrated by those with socio-economic and religious power toward the disenfranchised and begin to name and claim some of their responsibility in keeping those systems functioning.

Jacob spends the night alone on the far side of the stream of Jabbok. He is alone with his thoughts. He is alone with his fears. He is alone with the reality of his past and the uncertainty of his future. It is important not to rush past a simple observation: time is important. The time that Jacob takes creates the space for his struggle with God and the fullness of what he receives from God. Often, with the speed of American society and the disconnectedness that seems to follow in the wake of technology, taking time and being

present is something that cannot be taken for granted. Over and over again, the pilgrims that participated in the Family Missional Pilgrimage noted that they were concerned about how they would relate to their technology. Being able to create time and to be fully present is one way in which the pilgrims are able to be more fully aware of whom they were, who God was, and who the residents of Oak Cliff were. Pushing back against the speed and dislocation of technology allowed the pilgrims to take time and being as fully present as possible was one way in which the pilgrims affirmed the presence and life of the residents of Oak Cliff, the other pilgrims, God, and even their own lives.

It is during the night that Jacob wrestles with a man at the stream. It isn't really clear whom this man is, but the man is fully engaged in this physical wrestling match with Jacob. They wrestle through the night and the morning draws near, the man wants to go. In Exodus 33:20, God says "no one shall see me and live." Jacob's determination could cost him his life if he holds onto God and the daylight allows him to see the fullness of God's face. God wounds Jacob in the thigh, but Jacob will not let his adversary go. Some scholars believe that the man may be a water deity and that the story may be a story that has been appropriated into Genesis without much clarity.[5] For the sake of this project, the assumption is that the man whom Jacob wrestles with is God.[6]

During this struggle one can hear Long's theme of blessing when Jacob does not want to let the man go if he does not bless him. There is a sense of desperation in the two of them. If this is God, then when the sun comes up, Jacob will be able to see him and that will mean certain death for Jacob. Also, when the morning comes, Jacob will have to

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[5] Miguel De La Torre, *Genesis: Belief* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 282-283.

[6] Ibid., 283.

face his brother. This is an opportunity for him to face his brother with a blessing from God, and that is something he desires. Jacob is highly motivated at this moment because he will face his brother with an incredible sense of vulnerability. The blessing is a form of assurance for Jacob. Maybe it is an assurance of something that he already knows about himself. Maybe it is an assurance that he can carry into confronting his brother that will act as a shield from the consequences of his actions.

Jacob's request of God is consistent with his character and his history. God does not honor Jacob's request, instead God asks Jacob for his name. It is interesting that God asks for Jacob to tell him his name. Wouldn't God already know it? Could this be an opportunity God is giving Jacob to reveal what he thinks of himself? Is he the same Jacob that he has been since birth, or has something changed and is he willing to rename himself? God does not ask again; he gives Jacob the name Israel. Miguel A De La Torre says names in the Bible "reveal the essence of the person named."[7] One of the translations of Jacob means "the deceiver," but in renaming Jacob, God reframes his essence and his character.[8] Now, instead of being a deceiver who reaps the emotional, spiritual, and relational consequences of the turmoil he has spawned in seeking blessing and advantage in relationship with others. Jacob has fought with God and won. He has dealt with the strife in his relationship with his brother and, for a moment, there is peace. In so many ways, Jacob has overcome. The outcomes of these struggles are more than dead ends and pain. God is naming the new reality for Israel and he will overcome.[9]

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[7] Miguel De La Torre, *Genesis: Belief*, 282-283.

[8] Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1:521.

[9] James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, *Eerdman's Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 2003), 61.

Long believes there is some deeper transformation that is identified when Jacob is renamed. He believes that it is in Esau's face that Jacob sees "the face of the God who has been gracious to him."[10] Long suggests that, in light of the birthright and blessings Jacob has taken, he returns to Esau and asks him to "please my brother receive the blessing that is brought to you."[11] For Long, this is not to say that Jacob has been completely transformed, but it does hint that his character is a little "more giving."[12] Interestingly enough, Long also sees in Jacob's prayer to God that he has learned a sense of humility.

Jacob also asks God for God's name. As some scholars point out, as Jacob was given a new name to mark this new chapter in his life, he wants to know a new name for God in light of their struggle and its resolution.[13] God does not give Jacob his name, but he does give him a mark in the form of a limp. Jacob does not escape this struggle with God without paying a price. His confrontation with God and God's blessing costs him. It costs him his posture. It costs him his ability to physically fight others, or to be able to physically take things (like blessings) from them. He is now more dependent on others and more dependent on God. This struggle reflects more than just one episode between God and Jacob, but an ongoing relationship. Both the naming and the wound tell the reader that because of Jacob's determination and willingness to struggle with God, he has done more than survive. Yes, he grappled with God into the early morning and because

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[10] Jesse Long, "Wrestling with God to Win: A Literary Reading of the Story of Jacob at the Jabbok in Honor of Don Williams," SCJ 15 (Spring, 2012): 55.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 56.

[13] Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 566.

of that he has received his blessing. As the New Interpreter's Bible points out: "So the mark symbolizes both who Jacob is and who God is."[14] Because of what Jacob experiences at the stream, he uses his power to name the Piel in reflection of his struggle against God.

This would be the hope of the pilgrimage: to create space for both the pilgrims and the residents of Oak Cliff to wrestle with God and with their neighbors. The story implicitly connects the overnight struggle Jacob has with God and the reconciliation he experiences with Esau. For affluent Christians, to reconcile the prejudice and negative attitudes they have toward their less resourced brothers and sisters, they are going to have to struggle with their prejudiced stereotypes and with God. The expectation is not that they will completely change with one pilgrimage, but that there might be glimpses of growth on their journey of transformation. It is also important to acknowledge the role of risk in a pilgrimage such as this. Often, those that are traditionally oppressed due to their social or geographical locations take the greatest risks and are the most vulnerable when coming into contact with individuals and groups that embody assumed power because of their privilege. In forming a social project like this, there should be some thought giving to what costs and risks the affluent pilgrims will be making and also how will the project be implemented in a way not to allow suburban pilgrims to injure or take advantage of their neighbors during the process. This is why having equal representation around the table to help create and execute the experiment is critical.

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[14] Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 567.

Jacob's encounter with God at the stream of Jabbok brings up important themes about naming that inform the goal of the project in the Family Missional Pilgrimage. At the heart of the work that is being done is the theme of reconciliation. Even though pilgrims may not realize that their relationships to their brothers and sisters in Oak Cliff are fractured. Many people move to the suburbs to escape the negative attributes of the demographics of their communities in hopes of finding a place where the schools are good, opportunities abound, and churches reinforce their cultural values and the idea that they deserve what they have worked so hard to earn. Yet, no matter how far they move, they are ever connected socially, economically, psychologically with that which they leave behind. Instead of being individuals and families with names, hopes, and dreams, they become rhetorical objects used to justify their politics, their superiority, and even their generosity. These are broken relationships charged with a lot of emotion and layered with fear and anger.

God called Jacob to the Promised Land and entering the Promised Land meant having to reconcile with his brother. For Christians to live into the fullness of what God has promised, there will need to be reconciliation with our brothers and sisters from communities like Oak Cliff and those hidden in suburban communities like Prosper. Sharing the social and economic blessings that people of privilege have taken from others will not be easy. There will be a lot of fear and there will be the desire to sacrifice others for the sake of our self-image and ego because so much of how we understand ourselves and justify our lifestyles comes from demonizing and objectifying others. In a similar way, Jacob objectified the women and children that traveled with him. He pedaled them out to the front of the caravan to protect himself from the consequences of his actions.

We see evidence of the ways we coopt God into our own idolatry in our struggle with the rationalizations and justifications that we need to maintain our worldviews and privileged status. To reconcile with others, means that like Jacob, we will find ourselves struggling with God. Struggling to let go of what we have built our lives around holding onto and being willing to receive the blessing and wound of humility—of serving a God who is much larger and stronger than we are. Seeking to reconcile means that we will not be able to stand over others. Instead, we will approach others with a sense of self-awareness that signals our character has been transformed.

In the New Testament, Mark 7 gives us another angle from which to view the power to name. In what many Christians would consider an out of character moment for Jesus, he uses a racial slur against someone seeking his help. Yet, it wasn't Jesus' teaching that turned the situation, but the slyness of the mother that turned the slur around and in so doing received the healing she asked for. So, Jesus models for Christians the capacity to relinquish or resist prejudice and bias in favor of healing and grace. Again, the largeness of God means that mere crumbs can provide a feast of healing and hope.

New Testament Foundation

Jesus finishes an altercation with the Pharisees earlier in chapter seven and crosses over into the Gentile region of Tyre. Jesus is transgressing the purification laws that he suspends in his exchange with the Pharisees. Not only is he crossing into Gentile territory, he is going to engage in a conversation with a Gentile woman who is pleading for the life of her unclean daughter. He showed his authority as the master teacher in

Chapter Seven and now he is going to live into that teaching.[15] By crossing into the Gentile area of Tyre, entering someone's home, and engaging in conversation with the Greek mother, Jesus is physically crossing the purification rituals in which they challenged his authority. This periscope now puts those purification issues in perspective with his interaction with the Syrophoenician woman. Verse twenty-four reports that he enters a house because he did not want anyone to know he was there. This is not Jesus' first journey into Gentile lands and during the last trip he did not receive a warm welcome.[16] This was a continuation of the Jesus' desire for secrecy about who he was and what he was doing. Regardless of how hard he tried to keep his presence concealed, he could not do it. Mark reports that a woman whose daughter has an unclean spirit heard that he was present and searched him out. When she found him, she bowed down at his feet. David Rhoads points out that her posture gives the reader a physical representation of a "scavenging dog" by kneeling and begging.[17] This is an important contrast to Jesus' disciples and to the religious leaders, such as the Pharisees that he faced in the previous passage. Her understanding of who Jesus was and what he was capable of leads her to find and approach him in a more submissive manner. The disciples and religious leaders show little if any of that level of perception.[18]

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[15] Pheme Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press: 1995), 8:606-607.

[16] David Rhoads, "Jesus and the Syrophoenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion LXII/2,* (1994): 362.

[17] Ibid., 351.

[18] Pheme Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press: 1995), 609.

Mark takes the time to point out that she is a Gentile of Syrophoenician descent. He was setting the scene so that the reader understood the cultural norms that were in play in the conversation that was about to take place. First, this was a woman seeking out an unsolicited conversation with a male, rabbi no less. She was a woman and was not Jewish, but Greek. Layer upon layer of social norms push her down in relationship to Jesus. The fact that her daughter had an unclean spirit also means that she, too, was not clean. Now that she made her way into someone's home and into Jesus' presence, What would Jesus say and how would he react to her? Surely he would dismiss her from his presence. He wouldn't even talk to her. He would turn to the owner of the home to send her away now that she crossed the lines set for women and for non-Jews, as well as anyone that has contact with someone that was unclean.

This is not too far from what people can experience in the Twenty First Century in the United States. The social norms may not only be around gender, but there are norms around race, economic status, and sexual orientation, that are in place that keep people disconnected and isolated. In Jesus' time, Jews would not travel into Gentile regions and would have little need or desire to engage in a relationship with those that are unclean, or Gentiles. People that move out to suburban communities like Prosper, many times are moving away from communities like Oak Cliff. They perceive that the schools are not good, there is violence, and high crime rates, and that the people that live in community like Oak Cliff are not American, or do not belong in United States. Some of the individuals that live in Oak Cliff may clean houses in communities like Prosper. They may help build homes in the growing suburban communities, or to repair or install needed things in those homes. They may work in the restaurants affluent suburban

families frequent, or repair their vehicles. So, while there are norms and distance that separate these communities, the people are more connected than the residents of suburban communities might think.

Mark notes that the woman "begs" Jesus to cast out the demon that possessed her daughter. One can see just how determined she was in stepping over spoken and unspoken lines that would keep her from Jesus and she does not let pride restrain her. Rhoads explains that, in Mark's stories, whether it is healing or other circumstances, faith is action.[19] Jesus dismisses her saying, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." For those that see Jesus as the kind, meek, lover of all people, it can be hard to believe that he would speak to the mother like. In his address, he reflects his cultural context. He refers to priority of the Jews in God's eyes and his. The priority of his ministry and his attention are the people of Israel. If he is reflecting what sounds like an antagonistic attitude towards Gentiles in his discourse with the mother, then why is Jesus in the region of Tyre? Is it because he is running from the Pharisees, taking a calculated leave of absence after confronting religious leadership? Some scholars posit that in his initial response to the Syrophoenician mother, he does clarify who the first priority of his mission is, but he leaves room for there to be a place for Gentiles in God's work.[20]

Another point to consider is why Jesus came to Tyre. After all, he healed a Gentile possessed by a demon two chapters earlier, why would he not be open to doing the same at this particular moment in the Markan narrative? The scripture does not frame

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[19] David Rhoads, "Jesus and the Syrophoenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion LXII/2,* (1994): 360.

[20] Pheme Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press: 1995), 609.

Jesus' entry into this region as a part of his ministry, but rather as a part of fleeing, or taking a calculated absence, from the reach of the religious leaders he has contradicted and the crowds that were following him. So, while the way he turns back the mother may be a little hard to reconcile for those that have certain views about Jesus' character across the Gospels, his actions do have an internal consistency to the Gospel of Mark. This point can shed a little light on the importance of motives when one goes on pilgrimage. It can be possible to enter into a journey, or a ministry, with certain expectations of what you are trying to accomplish. For Jesus, his expectations were to escape the crowds and the drama of the conflict by seeking solace in someone's home in Tyre. It seems like he did not come with the intent to heal and when the opportunity presented itself, he balked at the mother's request. In the more affluent communities, the way Christians are raised in their families, the way churches create opportunities to serve, and the way charity is marketed to those with financial resources, expectations are created about whom the people are they are helping and what their role is in the relationship. Sometimes these images can subtly reinforce stereotypes and support uneven relational dynamics between people and communities from different socio-economic strata. This is why helping affluent Christians see the power they have in society and the ways that power can manifest itself through how they perceive and label the lives of others is critical to preparing them to set aside their power in order for others claim it for their own lives.

For those who see Jesus as a loving, caring, and perfect Messiah, Jesus' willingness to reject this mother and the negativity of this response are difficult to reconcile. Referring to her, and non-Jews, as dogs, is a pretty strong slur for Mark to record. In the face of that verbal affront, the mother does not yield in their social

confrontation. She does not retreat from her position physically, or relationally. She does not swell in rage or pride in response to Jesus. Instead, she understands the power and leverage she has in this particular situation and it comes in the use of her words. As one can see in other Gospel passages, Jesus takes a question, remark, or assertion by religious leaders or people that he heals, or helps. In this conversation, it is a role reversal. It is the woman that takes what Jesus says and turns it on him. She replies, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Just like the midwives in Exodus that chose to play upon the racism and stereotypes of the Pharaoh to justify why they disobeyed his command to kill the male infants of the Jews, the Syrophoenician mother used Jesus' prejudiced comments to wedge space in their discourse for Jesus to show grace and heal her daughter. She gave him a way that would not dishonor him, or disrespect him any more than she already had. He was able to save face in the eyes of the people around him.

Gerd Theissen explains well what this Greek mother does. "The Syrophoenician woman accomplishes something that for us today seems at least as marvelous as the miracle itself: she takes a cynical image and 'restructures' it in such a way that it permits a new view of the situation and breaks through walls that divide people, walls that are strengthened by prejudice."[21] For Theissen, behind the story is the connection between Jesus' use of the image of children in reference to the people of Israel and the woman's desire for her child.[22] He also sees her take the negative image of dog that Jesus used in his slur and gives it "positive value."[23] Just as easily as dogs can be identified or

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[21] Gerd Thiessen, *Gospels in Context: A Social and Political History in the Synoptic Gospel,* trans. by Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 80.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

associated with negative images, Theissen points out that dogs have positive traits and enrich the lives of their owners.[24] In particular, he points out that dogs are "loyal" and "devoted." If Jesus' slur is meant to signal her lesser value in his estimation, it is her faithfulness and devotion that makes visible the frailty of Jesus' prejudice.[25]

Jesus travels to Tyre to get away from the crowds and Jewish leaders. While looking for some sort of refuge, he also makes himself vulnerable to engagements such as the one he is having with the Syrophoenician mother. She takes the initiative to seek out and engage Jesus for the sake of her daughter. For affluent Christians, going to areas like Oak Cliff and spending the night and working in the community will be a new experience. They will feel vulnerable and unsure regardless of their privilege and position in society because the usual physical distance and societal norms that shield them from more than cursory interaction with people from different ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds will not be in place. Can they exercise enough self-awareness and openness to listen to the church members and residents of Oak Cliff as they talk about their lives and how they understand who Jesus is and why they seek him? If the residents feel empowered to speak with enough candor and they challenge the views and stereotypes of the affluent pilgrims, will the pilgrims resist using their power to shut down a challenge to their worldview? These are the questions that drive why the Family Missional Pilgrimage is so important.

For how she responded and what she said, Jesus decided to grant her the chance to leave with the knowledge that Jesus had healed her daughter. For Surekha Nelavala,

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[24] Gerd Thiessen, *Gospels in Context: A Social and Political History in the Synoptic Gospel,* trans. by Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 80.

[25] Ibid.

Jesus ultimately acts in a way that represents God's abundant love.[26] Jesus heard her response and it impacted him and his decision to help her daughter. She had a goal and that was the healing of her daughter, not the saving of her dignity. This is a perspective that many have if they do not have the social or political power in relationship to others. They want what is best for their families. For immigrant families, their needs are not for great schools, property values, and terrific extra-curricular activities. Many times, like my wife has explained to me, it is about having work that can provide the basics for their family. To be able to earn an income that allows their kids to stay in school and not have to drop out to support the family. For some immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Central America, they are hoping to provide a safer place to live that removes their families from war, drug cartel violence, or other forms of social upheaval. Just like the woman is willing to use whatever influence she can muster to make the life for her daughter better, so will individuals and families in communities like Oak Cliff.

She did have a great response to Jesus' remarks and Jesus reacted by not exercising his power to further marginalize and humiliate her. Instead, he listened to what she had to say and he responded by not using his social power to further disparage her. He did not press his resistance any more. He did not reach out to the owner to make the woman leave. The woman could have kept silent, but she did not. In terms of social protocol, she appropriately acknowledged what Jesus said, but it was in her refusal to physically leave that she gave her true answer: no. It was her rejection of what Jesus had wanted her to do that created the tension in the scene and gave Jesus the impetus for a deeper consideration of her request and the space to broaden for the reader the scope of

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[26] Nelavala, Surekha, "Smart Syrophoenician Woman: A Dalit Feminist Reading of Mark 7:24-31," *The Expository Times* 118:2 (2006): 68.

the kingdom of God.[27] For Jesus, her determination on behalf of her daughter and her belief that Jesus could do something about it, led Jesus to relent. This is a teachable story for affluent Christians because they can find themselves benefitting from so many cultural norms. Christianity has been the dominant religion in North America for centuries. They have the resources that allow them to be mobile, to have access to certain choices, and because many suburban Christians are Euro-American, they benefit from the colonial predisposition of our culture. From the pulpit, through the media, and in the culture of education, government and commerce, White affluent privilege affords them the venue to frame issues, win debates, and ostracize people from different ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds.

Fear is an incredible driver for coopting affluent Christians into effort to maintain White privilege. Terms like "the war on the middle class" used in politics today, and the response to the racial tensions flaring in our country by seeking to supplant the slogan "Black Lives Matter" with "All Lives Matter" are used to keep moving the public conversation from talking about power, discrimination, and the existence of White privilege. Like Jesus in Mark Seven, modern day affluent Christians that benefit from the institutional disenfranchisement of others, would have to consciously listen to others as they speak from their socio-economic location in our culture and choose to relinquish their power so that others may experience fullness of God's grace, healing, and reconciliation of all people.

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[27] Nelavala, Surekha, "Smart Syrophoenician Woman: A Dalit Feminist Reading of Mark 7:24-31," *The Expository Times* 118:2 (2006): 68.

Historical Foundations

In this conversation about the power to name and label, pilgrimage was used as a means of grace for both affluent and those who are a part of communities consistently labeled as poor to acknowledge how they interact with that power and how building relationship across socio-economic lines can change those dynamics. When talking about pilgrimage one talks about an internal or physical journey that impact the lives of pilgrims. In evaluating the historical foundations for discussing pilgrimage, St. Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother, and her travel to Palestine was discovered. Scholars are not unified in their view of her travels. Some argue that her journey to the eastern regions of the empire were merely political sojourns on behalf of her son and his agenda. Others believe there was a worthy spiritual component that needs to be acknowledged in her motives and practices in Palestine. It is interesting to hold the two in tension because I believe that it is true to the experience of those who carry their socio-economic and political privilege with them into their missional experiences and how the families and individuals they travel to serve experience the perpetuation of the systemic oppression in their interaction with affluent pilgrims during these endeavors.

It may be a simplistic thought, but as one who benefits from the privilege of how colonialism and imperialism have drawn and labeled so many maps and interpreted their meaning, it is important to apply discipline when observing the maps. Julie Ann Smith discusses how maps can be "rhetorical" and "persuasive" tools that are constructed by the "landscapes and mindscapes" to convey meaning and a certain point of view to the

reader.[28] She reminds the reader that when it comes to what many people in the Twenty First Century call the "holy land," is a construction that was shaped by many bishops, monks, emperors, and other that had the power to do so. Over time, they took a landscape that already had names and landmarks and re-mapped it in light of Christian scriptures and the meaningful narratives that helped to support the faith and to bolster the power of those forming the map. Smith explains, "The land could not achieve status as a Christian place until Christians had identified it with Christian understandings of their history."[29] She goes on to argue that the "holy land" as a destination for Christians really did not develop until Constantine, partly through the efforts of his mother, created the destination: "…Constantine absorbed pagan and Jewish notions of holy places and pilgrimage into his new imperial religion, thus making Palestine a focal point for Christians of the empire."[30]

When naming has taken place through colonialism, I think of how new lands are given names in honor of the colonizers homeland. New York and the Americas come to mind. How people are named and labeled happens from the perspective of the powerful that record history. So, for Columbus and those that came to the "New World," the indigenous communities they encountered were considered savages, heathens, uncivilized, and in need of training like children. Because religion was intertwined with the imperial agenda, what was considered was also considered unholy. When Helena made her way to Palestine, she was a part of the process of demarcating the holy and the

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[28] Julie Ann Smith, "My Lord's Native Land: Mapping the Christian Holy Land," *Church History* 76:1 (2007): 2.

[29] Ibid.,, 3.

[30] Ibid.

profane. Through her direction and her experience of divine revelation she influenced how the landscape told the Christian story and the narrative of her son's imperial power and authority. In efforts like the Family Missional Pilgrimage, pilgrims cross over physical and psychological lines. They are moving from the suburbs to urban areas. They are migrating from places they see as safe, to places that have been branded dangerous. They are moving from interacting with people that look like them, think like them, and talk like them to places where people speak different languages, have very different life experiences, and physically look different than they do. Affluent pilgrims carry within them clear meanings about people and places they experience on a map, and as people coming from a religious institution, in the back of their minds, they may also carry ideas of what places are blessed or which types of people are closer to God.

In defining the Christian holy land, Helena's journey to Palestine in 327 A.D. may be the most pivotal, because it is during that trip that she identified a site associated with Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and the Holy Sepulcher.[31] Its location was under a pagan temple and with a letter sent to the bishop, Constantine had the temple torn down and removed. Whether it was the original site, or not, did not matter. As the Emperor, Constantine had the power to make it so and anyone who would think of contesting his claim would face terrible consequences. In communities such as Oak Cliff there are many individuals and families that do not have legal status; they are undocumented. They have rights under laws, but have little if any political power. Many times they fear engagement with law enforcement because they do not want to be discovered and deported. When people come to rezone their neighborhoods for what is called "revitalization," or "re-

[31] Julie Ann Smith, "My Lord's Native Land: Mapping the Christian Holy Land," *Church History* 76:1 (2007): 8.

gentrification," they do not feel they have the power to stand up and stop them. When their houses are torn down and more expensive homes, or high-end shops, are built in their place, it is a classic way in which maps are redrawn. Helena brought a lot of resources with her to help her son's cause. She brought money and gifts to share with the people in Palestine and because of her generosity on behalf of her son; she fostered good will and support among the elites and influence brokers in the region. This is another way that religious and secular alike are influenced to support the agendas of developers, politicians, big businesses, etc. to gerrymander their area of choice to get the results they desire.

Historically, Smith points out that over time traditions formed about Helen's influence on the development of the holy land. It evolved into not only Augusta discovering the Holy Sepulcher, but also the discovery of the True Cross.[32] As her narrative grew, it elevated Helena's presence as a part of God's will and highlighted her commitment to uncovering and preserving the places that were visited by Jesus.[33] Her discernment about these holy sites associated with Jesus came through conversations she had with Jews and Christians and her exploration of the scriptures.[34] This is the power that the people who write history have. Whether in a moment, or over years, the media and the historians can shape the storyline of a particular set of events. Their headlines and the perspective of their presentations can unquestioningly perpetuate the power of the elites in society and frame events and circumstances in ways that lend themselves to

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[32] Julie Ann Smith, "My Lord's Native Land: Mapping the Christian Holy Land," *Church History* 76:1 (2007): 10.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 11.

solidifying and justifying the actions and outcomes of particular situations. Sometimes that can by actively undermining marginalized groups, or by leaving them out of the story all together; leaving their views absent from the story. There are few places in the modern public arena in which there can be an open dialogue about points of view and ideas about current events. We live in a polarized cultural context and if you question certain view, certain narratives being told by the dominant culture, then one can be attacked, or ostracized. When one questions the motives of our country's military narrative around war, such as our intervention in the Middle East, then one's patriotism can be questioned. If one differs from what are considered the popular conservative Christian narratives on gay marriage and abortion, one's Christianity can be attacked and questioned or can be drowned out by the media in order to protect the financial and political interests of those behind the multinational organizations and media itself.

Smith outlines the impact of Helena's work: "Her journey and her identifications of the holy places and the Cross had recovered Jerusalem and placed it at the center of the Christian world, and made her the first of a number of elite women pilgrims who would invest vast fortunes in the structural definition of Palestine."[35] Jan Willem Drijvers explains that the purpose behind Eusebius' writings about Helena were driven by the desire to show that she was a great empress and that she was an extension of her son's fair and just rule. She writes, "The pious Helena visiting Palestine, founding churches and stepping in the footsteps of Jesus serves to enhance the piety of her son, his patronage of Christianity, in particular in Palestine, as well as to provide a background to the emperor's provenance as Helena's son. The passages about Helena emphasize her

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[35] Julie Ann Smith, "My Lord's Native Land: Mapping the Christian Holy Land," *Church History* 76:1 (2007): 11.

royalty, piety and humanity."[36] So, even the record we have for Helena is one that has been adapted and manipulated to reinforce the imperial agenda and support its legitimacy. Drijvers points out that one possible reason for presenting her in this way was because of the lack of support and even outright opposition for Constantine in the eastern regions of the kingdom.[37] Not only could Helena's travels be seen as a way of trying to mitigate such anger and dislike among the people that lived on the outskirts of the community, but her generous, faithful, and humble visit to the Palestine came on the heels of her son murdering his wife and son for fear of losing his throne.[38] This was a publicity-driven affair. Drijvers also makes the case that her "so-called" pilgrimage was really a matter of the state by not only pointing out the types of things she did, but also the name and title she traveled under.[39] She did not travel under a non-descript title, or in a down-to-earth nature. She traveled under the full regalia on an Augusta and she acted not as a pilgrims coming to quietly visit holy sites and pay homage to Jesus. [40] She pardoned prisoners, poured out expensive gifts upon people, built churches, listened to grievances and forgave sentences.[41] It is no wonder that in light of how Eusebius positioned Helena in his writings and how those traditions began to take hold and become a part of the common historical ethos, Helena became the example for the empresses that

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[36] Jan Willem Drijvers. "Helena Augusta: Cross and Myth. Some new Reflections," *Millennium Eight Yearbook on the Culture and History of the First Millennium C.E.* (2011), 138.

[37] Ibid., 139.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 128.

[40] Ibid., 139.

[41] Jan Willem Drijvers, "Helena Augusta: Cross and Myth. Some new Reflections," *Millennium Eight Yearbook on the Culture and History of the First Millennium C.E.* (2011), 140.

would follow. In the centuries that followed, empresses followed in the footsteps of Helena, as presented by Eusebius, in their work on behalf of the empire.[42] All of this was melded into the physical, psychological, and spiritual map of Palestine. Helena's work along with Eusebius' portrayal laid the foundation for how the formation of the modern conception of the holy land and the work and influence of the Constantine and Helena. Just as highways, interstates, roads, parks, schools, and other public markers are named after presidents, activists, wealthy benefactors, and historical figures, so was Helena's and Constantine's influence tied to the basilicas, holy sites, and other structures that were built during their building program.

The overlay of meaning did not necessarily begin with Helena, although she did infuse a great deal of influence into the mapping and definition of the holy lands. It also did not stop with her. Other pilgrims followed in the decades and centuries that followed and their accounts and the history recorded about them added to what already existed.[43] Notable pilgrims included the Bordeaux pilgrim, Egeria, and Paula traveled to the Palestine. They each walked the steps of Jesus and visited holy sites. They recorded their experiences and in their work influenced the perception of the pilgrims that would come after them. Even historians such as Jerome helped promote their interpretations through their writings and recounting the itineraries as well as the geographical and spiritual encounters along the way. Affluent pilgrims built churches and founded monasteries and hostels near the churches and basilicas they built.[44] Not only did they shape the mental

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[42] Ibid., 145.

[43] Ibid., 146.

[44] Julie Ann Smith, "My Lord's Native Land: Mapping the Christian Holy Land," *Church History* 76:1 (2007): 25.

images of those that read their works, but also influenced the pilgrim's experience of the physical geography by planting people along the journey. After the first group that traveled to Honduras from Prosper returned and stood up in front of the church and told the stories of their life-changing experiences, the mental images and some of the emotional responses of parents and leaders in the church began to change. This kind of influence can diffuse anxiety, or if someone has a negative experience or interprets the mission in a way that reinforces the ideals of privilege and stereotypical prejudice, then it can have a negative outcome. Oded Irshai writes about how liturgy formed around the pilgrimage of Helena Augusta and helped to solidify and give theological and historical legitimacy to the changes she brought to Palestine.[45] The role of liturgy continued to develop and evolve as other prominent pilgrims built religious buildings and through their writings helped offer meaning for the people to whom they wrote.

As one takes into account Augusta Helena's journey to the Palestine in the fourth century, one can see parallels in how the affluent pilgrims of today can wield power to name and shape how people experience places on a map just as she did. While the idea of her journey being a spiritual exercise were present, there is strong evidence to suggest that it also served the purpose of legitimizing the imperial rule of her son, Constantine, and furthering his agenda. In the Fourth Century, it may have been difficult to separate those two strands of meaning, and for affluent pilgrims in the Twenty First Century, it may be equally as challenging to acknowledge that missional endeavors like the Family Missional Pilgrimage could have an explicit spiritual purpose, but also be used to reaffirm oppressive names, labels, and frameworks that are disempowering for some non-

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[45] Oded Irshai, "The Christian Appropriation of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century: The Case of the Bordeaux Pilgrim, *"The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99:4 (Fall 2009): 467.

privileged demographics such as women, ethnic minorities, and undocumented residents. Her journey also showed how people with resources could not only name and label the physical landscape of a region, but in doing so attribute meaning to that geography. One can see that in contemporary circumstances when affluent benefactors, or political leaders have schools, highways, parks, and even church buildings named after them. It is a way in which their position and privilege is ingrained in the physical landscape in the mental understanding of people as they travel the physical space. Finally, in Helena's story and in the pilgrimages of others that followed, one can see how elite pilgrims, and the historians that traced their steps, were able to influence the minds of pilgrims and non-pilgrims, as well as the physical sites to which they traveled, through their narratives. The voices of others are left out because they do not hold a place of prominence, whether by station or resource, it gives privilege to those that tell stories and write history and that is a power to name reality and shape the reality of others. It is my hope that in the Family Missional Pilgrimage, affluent pilgrims will recognize the power their voice carries when they name and describe their reality and the lives of others. It is also my hope that if they are willing to restrain themselves, they might be able to hear the voices of other pilgrims, like some of the residents of Oak Cliff, that experience the geography and meaning of North Texas differently than they do. In the theological foundations, it will focus on the theological underpinnings for the Family Missional Pilgrimage and how it can be a means through which some pilgrims may come to a place of restraint, while others may find the grace to claim their voice to name and define their journey.

Theological Foundations

In Genesis Thirty-Two and Mark Seven, the respective authors communicate the power of naming, but in different ways. These scriptures clue the reader in to the personality and character of the person being named. In Genesis, God renames Jacob, Israel. By taking this initiative, God is redefining how the reader is to understand Jacob's future relationships with others and with God. The initiative that God took in Genesis Thirty-Two, also informs the reader about who God is and God's commitment to Israel, the person, and Israel, the people. Mark's story of the Syrophoenician woman gives the reader a window into ancient near Eastern culture and the negative implications that can be associated with naming. Jesus' response to a mother's request for healing for her daughter and Jesus' insulting response, show how a man in a place of gender and the ethnic privilege can express contempt for someone such as the Syrophoenician mother. It is also a great example of how a desperate woman leverages the relational power she has to negate and redirect Jesus' negative naming for the healing of her daughter. Her dealings with Jesus provide a moment in which she uses the power she has and Jesus reconsiders the way in which he will use the power of his social location toward the mother and creates space for healing and hope for reconciliation.

The Family Missional Pilgrimage's intent was to make affluent pilgrim and the residents of Oak Cliff aware of the imbalance of power in their relationship and how that imbalance is understood in respect to the act of naming. In recognition of their assumed power to name and the negative and diminishing impact it has on those being labeled, it is believed that the two groups will make different decisions about how to use, or not use, their power. The theological foundation for this project was derived from the Wesleyan

understanding of the means of grace. Since Wesley employed "the means of grace" as a discipline for personal and church transformation, the question being answered is: Can serving with the poor be a means of grace through which the power of naming can be identified and different behaviors can be mutually explored in hopes of moving beyond the neocolonial norms that are often followed by the elite of our culture and the lesser resourced?

In the following section, the term "means of grace" will be defined by John Wesley and what role they played in the Methodist movement. In particular, the role of working with the poor will be referenced. Then, the means of grace in the contemporary context of church renewal through the work of Jason Vickers and Joerg Rieger will be discussed. Finally, the role of the means of grace in light of the work of Asian feminist, Kwok Pui-lan, and womanist thinker, Traci C. West will be evaluated as well.

John Wesley

John Wesley employed the interpretation of the "means of grace" he learned from the Anglican Church. He defined the means of grace as "outward signs, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."[46] He understood these means to be: "prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon) and receiving the

[46] Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 160.

Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him."[47] For postcolonial feminist critics, like Kwok Pui-lan, in order to use the means of grace for transforming relationships, there needs to be awareness that how poverty, naming, and the imbalance of power expresses itself in relationships puts women, and especially, immigrant, or women from developing nations, at an incredible disadvantage. The means of grace must be interrogated about the motives and expectations of them in relationship to a middle-class, male-dominated institution like the Anglican Church. The church was created so that King Henry VIII could have more social and theological flexibility in his relationship with his wife and other women. From the purpose of its creation to its agenda, it is important that the means of grace being utilized do reinforce but resist that agenda.

In the time leading up to, and including the life and ministry of John Wesley, there were many theological forces shaping the lives of faithful people in the crucible of European Christianity. In England, one of the poignant theological doctrines was the doctrine of justification. For Wesley, much of his personal life and ministry revolved around articulating a clear doctrine of justification and a doctrine of assurance. In short, the doctrine of justification explained how, by God's grace, humanity's relationship with God is restored through faith in Jesus Christ. The doctrine of assurance refers to how a person who has been justified by faith in Jesus Christ can experience assurance of his or her salvation. These doctrines were at the forefront of his mind in his dealings with the Moravians, his experience at Aldersgate, and in the practical discipleship of the people in

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[47] Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 160.

the societies he organized.[48] Ultimately, Wesley developed a doctrine of justification that dismissed the Calvinistic belief that salvation came from the imputed righteousness of Christ and embraced the belief from his Arminian roots in the Anglican Church that justification came from faith alone in Christ's atoning work. It is God's grace that makes that justifying faith possible. Therefore, justification was the work of God and liberated the person from the guilt of sin and the wrath of God. For Wesley, though, the work done in justification was the release of guilt. In other words, this is what Christ did "for us."[49] The consequence of God's justifying grace is the regeneration of the heart of the believer; this is what God does "in us."[50] This regeneration was the primary work of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit did not work alone. The Holy Spirit, in concert with human agency, did the work of sanctification together.

This partnership between humanity and God to reshape the soul and grow in holiness was critical for Wesley in his philosophy of discipleship. With it, the ordinances of the church and the means of grace played a part in the salvation and the sanctification of the believer. So, when Wesley encountered the English Moravians who were influencing the Fetter Lane Society by teaching that all one had to do was be still and wait for the salvation of the Lord, he could not agree. Wesley believed that, even in the waiting for salvation, one could practice the means of grace through which God's

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[48] David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1987), 44–49.

[49] Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, "Justification by Faith," (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 114.

[50] Ibid.

prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace could flow.[51] Wesley integrated the regular practice of the means of grace in the societies and band meetings that he employed to revitalize the Church of England. Over time, the practices of the means of grace expanded to include Christian conferencing, fasting, and works of mercy.[52] So early in Wesley's understanding of the means of grace as part of the expectations to be a part of the societies of bands, members were expected not only to practice works of piety (prayer, scripture, the sacraments, fasting, and Christian conferencing), but also to practice charity (collect money to help the needy). Also, they were encouraged to go to the hospitals, the prisons, and, for the society members who had resources, into the poor areas of England to interact and show compassion upon the suffering.

As the economy of England improved and the moral behavior that Wesley ingrained in the early Methodists played out, a number of Methodist society members began to move out of poverty into a more affluent economic lifestyle.[53] Wesley began to sense that the Methodists who had once been so committed to giving and serving were beginning to have a change of heart and, as a result, they were not producing the same fruits of service and mercy in their lives. In his sermon, "The Danger of Riches," Wesley vents his frustration at what he is seeing in his people.[54] Wesley was clear in his concern that this rise in personal economy was undermining peoples' commitment to Christ and serving the poor: "You are so deeply hurt that you have well-nigh lost your zeal for

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[51] Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 161.

[52] Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Tradition* (Nashville, TN: The General Board of Higher Education, The United Methodist Church, 2011), 30.

[53] Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons,* "The Danger of Riches," (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 451.

[54] Ibid., 451.

works of mercy, as well as piety. You once pushed on, through cold or rain, or whatever cross lay in your way, to see the poor, the sick, the distressed. You went about doing good, and found out those who were not able to find you. You cheerfully crept down into their cellars, and climbed up into their garrets…"[55] This growing insulation and self-concern bothered Wesley because he saw the works of mercy as means of grace and as a sign of sanctification. Serving and loving one's neighbor was a sign God was working in your life and you were growing in your faith.

Contemporary Applications

John Wesley viewed the commitment to participating in the means of grace as integral to the regeneration of the individual and the renewal of the Church of England. Today, the United Methodist Church is losing members and worship attendance is plummeting. There are no shortage of theologians, pastors, and denominational leaders stepping forward and offering a road map for the church to regain its vitality and relevancy. In this section on contemporary applications, the works of Jason Vickers, Joerg Rieger, Kwok Pui-lan, and Traci West will be considered.

Jason Vickers

Jason Vickers, professor at United Theological Seminary, offers a provocative way to reframe the importance of the means of grace for church renewal. What is critical about Vickers's contribution to the church renewal conversation is a willingness to

[55] Ibid., 462.

explore the "Pentecostal" nature of church renewal.[56] Using Acts Two and corresponding narratives of the early church and the presence of the Holy Spirit, Dr. Vickers lists some of the common characteristics of the church: "waiting upon the Lord in prayer, the reception and celebration of the Holy Spirit, humble repentance and baptism, the study of doctrine, the praise and worship of the Holy Trinity in a spirit of thanksgiving, a deep concern for one another's welfare, and a vital and vibrant witness to Jesus Christ."[57] For Vickers, it is God, who through the power of the Holy Spirit brought the church into being and worked through the disciples to grow the church. It is the intimate and life-giving relationship between believers and God, through the Holy Spirit, that defines the nature of the church. In terms of postcolonial criticism, exploring the nature of the early church is a positive step. Pui-lan argues that the early church was more egalitarian and inclusive in nature. It was only once Constantine absorbed the church into his imperial agenda that Christianity began to become more entangled with the colonizing agenda of Constantine.

In this construction of the nature of the church, the initiator and cultivator of the church is God through the Holy Spirit. If one holds this line of thinking to its logical conclusion, then the means of grace are not an act created by humans to initiate an encounter with God to gain insight in wisdom for leading the church; instead, the Holy Spirit actually "administers the church" through these means of grace.[58] He goes on to explain how the church's inability or unwillingness to articulate and incarnate a life in

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[56] Jason E Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 30.

[57] Ibid., 35.

[58] Ibid., 62–63.

which the Holy Spirit plays a vital role through the means of grace contributes to the church's decline.[59] Vickers makes his case that through theological reduction, and omission, the church has lost the orientation of its original purpose. Instead of marketing itself as a place to "find food, fellowship, and fun, or to find people who are inclusive, open, tolerant, and diverse," the church is a "spiritual hospital in and through which God works to bring about healing, which is to say our salvation (the Greek word for salvation also means healing)."[60] He is encouraged because God, through the Holy Spirit, has not abandoned the church, but through the practice of the means of grace, the Holy Spirit has gifted the church with channels through which direction, healing, transformation, and salvation may be made known.[61]

The goal of church renewal is one of "sanctifying the church" and for the Holy Spirit through the means of grace to lead the church in working out salvation and sanctification through endeavoring to perfect the ministry by growing more perfect in its love.[62] For Vickers, this includes truth telling about the church's blemishes, confession, and forgiveness. This type of confessing is only the first step in realizing the extent to which the church has not resisted systematic oppression of women, non-whites, and those that live in the Third World. Sanctification is the dual work of God and humanity to grow in the image of God and for this God is not one that excludes but includes. Due to the work of renewal is that of the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit will determine how it will do

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[59] Jason E Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 82.

[60] Ibid., 91.

[61] Ibid., 96.

[62] Ibid., 96–97.

the work of renewing the church and by what means it will do it. As Wesley points out, the means of grace are nothing on their own.[63] One cannot use them to command or manipulate God. It is God who can use any means of grace, or use no means of grace, to accomplish His purposes. Therefore, it is imperative for the church, and the believer, to realize that the focus is always on God and not on the means of grace. Wesley writes,

> Settle this in your heart, that the *opus operatum*, the mere work done, profiteth nothing; that there is no *power* to save but in the Spirit of God, now *merit* but in the blood of Christ; that consequently even what God ordains conveys no grace to the soul if you trust not in him alone. On the other hand, he that does truly trust in him cannot fall short of the grace of God, even though he were cut off from every outward ordinance, though he were shut up in the centre of the earth.[64]

Part of my hope in this project was that through the Family Missional Pilgrimage, affluent suburban pilgrims would acknowledge the inherent power they wield in society and realize that this assumed power, in the form of naming and labeling, can and does diminish the capacity of others to name and claim their own lives and reality in which they live. If they are not able to be honest because they cannot see this reality, then, by God's grace, they would be made aware of these realities. Then through that awareness and repentance, they would be able to grow more perfect in their love for their neighbor and for God. Ronald Sider in, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, highlights the work of Wesley's class meetings reflecting the spirit of the generosity and mutuality that existed in glimpses in the New Testament.[65] Sider laments the absence of church or other faith communities that practice the

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[63] Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater *John Wesley's Sermons,* 160.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving From Affluence to Generosity 20th Anniversary Revision* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997), 211.

disciplines of those class meetings: gatherings of the people, prayers, the sharing of the Word, caring for one another, and mutual accountability for spiritual growth.[66] Sider and Vickers are calling for the renewal or creation of structures that can live out the commandments of the Old Testament and of Christ to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Joerg Rieger

Joerg Rieger in *Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions* expands the conversation about church renewal through the means of grace to include works of mercy and elaborates upon how these works of mercy can be critical to the church's future. He argues that the church has lost its spiritual potency and vital relationship with God.[67] He takes the next step and offers that the lack of vitality may be due not to the lack "spiritual power but how little difference the church makes in the world."[68] This is an interesting contrast because in my understanding, it is not an either or scenario. The reason the church is making little impact in the world may be precisely because it has lost the fullness of mission and power that comes through a deeper relationship with God exhibited in the early church in Acts Two. For the church to rediscover the fullness of its relationship with God and to cultivate a greater effect in the world, Rieger argues that the Wesleyan understanding of the means of grace must be broadened and a greater consideration given to the two commandments given by Christ to

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[66] Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions* (Nashville, TN, The General Board of Higher Education, The United Methodist Church, 2011), 211.

[67] Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving From Affluence to Generosity 20th Anniversary Revision*, 291.

[68] Ibid.

the disciples: to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. It is the lack of emphasis given to the latter of the commandments that disturbs Rieger.[69] With John Wesley having preached, taught, and lived out how important loving one's neighbor is to God and to one's salvation, Rieger sees an opportunity for the church to repent of its self-focus and anemic spirituality. In broad terms, one part of the theological spectrum focuses on the right belief, or orthodoxy, while the other side of the spectrum places a higher emphasis on right action, or orthpraxis.[70] For Rieger, Wesley works to hold those two theological poles of the church together in a healthy tension, and it is Rieger who suggests that if the current United Methodist Church will seek to do the same, there may be hope for the church and for the world.[71]

According to Rieger, there are two struggles that mainline Christian churches have today. First, as he suggests, many affluent Christians in today's church experience acts of mercy, or serving the poor or marginalized, as a one-way flow of material and spiritual blessing through them to others. Even when affluent Christians speak of "being blessed" by serving others, instead of understanding their material blessing as being a transformational moment in which God transforms their lives, it can quite easily be have the opposite effect. People can leave feeling blessed about what they have and their current lifestyle to the extent that they do not conceptualize of God outside of one who provides the means for their lifestyle and materialism. Rieger goes as far as to point out that if well-meaning affluent Christians are not careful and do not address their

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[70] Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions,* 31.

[71] Ibid., 33.

[72] Ibid.

idealization of their socio-economic status, then they can become brokers for the continued marginalization and abuse of people who are powerless and on the edges of society.[72] He relates the insights of George Tinker, a Native American scholar, who told of the how White missionaries, without realizing it, helped broker the abuse and disempowerment of Native American Indians through their work. For Tinker, White missionaries were not able to truly absorb and integrate what the American Indians could teach them because they were so entrenched in their own social and cultural superiority.[73]

Second, if Christians narrowly focused on a select few ordinances, or means of grace, that fit their place in the spectrum of orthopraxis or orthodoxy, then the two do not inform one another. For many, there is great deal of emphasis given to the Word, to worship, and prayer. On the other hand, there is a great deal of talk about justice and serving the poor, but very little actual effort in building relationships of mutuality and loving people who do not look, act, and think like some may. For Wesley, the Christian was to pursue all of these with passion and zeal.[74] But for Wesley, if one were in a situation in which there was an opportunity to show mercy to someone in poverty or suffering, then that would take priority over any act of piety such as prayer or reading scripture.[75]

As a means of grace, Rieger affirms that works of mercy are bi-directional in terms of the flow of the Holy Spirit providing life-changing resources and mercy to those being served but also an overflowing of love, perspective, and self-awareness for the ones

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[73] Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions,* 34-35.

[74] Ibid., 35.

[75] Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons,* 468.

[76] Ibid., 469.

who set out to serve. In works of mercy, "a real encounter with God takes place, which is closely linked to the encounter with the other."[76] In this encounter, there is more going on than an awareness or realization of God's presence. One not only receives life-giving and life-changing grace from God through the works of mercy, but by the sheer fact that God has made works of mercy channels of his grace, it says something about who God is and the things that God does. God is not only one who is revealed in prayer and scripture and the sacraments, but we learn something about God's character because he chooses to be revealed in through the poor and marginalized.[77] God chose to be born to a carpenter and not to the son of a religious leader does impact what one learns about God. This is a helpful way of seeing that God seeks to relate to people and that the socio-economic realities through which God seeks to enter into the world show a value of people that are often forgotten or not considered as important as others. However, I think postcolonial feminist critics would also question the damage that has been done in devaluing and abusing women because God became a man.

On the first evening of the Family Mission Pilgrimage, Rieger met with the suburban pilgrims and commented about how he did not have the authority to talk to the people of Oak Cliff about how they experienced God because Oak Cliff was not his context. Rieger generalized that most people understood God in relationship to their environment and day-to-day life and that when they built relationships with people from different socio-economic or cultural locations, they may have experienced a different understanding of God from that context. Now, the question was: Instead of understanding

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[77] Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions*, 33.

[78] Ibid.

God from one context, how we do conceive of a God that is the God of both? For people who work in corporations and in the business world, one of the ways that they may understand leadership is through the office of the chief executive officer (CEO) and that may be the way to interpret the role of the pastor. Instead of working from the top down as it would be possible through a religious leader, or a CEO, Jesus chose to work from the fringes and with people who were pushed to the edge of society for all sorts of reasons. Thus, one has to choose which way to construct whom God is and how God deals with power based on how He chose to identify with the poor and marginalized. When this life-changing, perspective-transforming grace is poured into those involved in works of mercy, God is not only transforming the lives of those involved and working out individual redemptions. God is redeeming and converting hearts that can become the basis for the reshaping of broken relationships and imbalanced systems that can lead not only to the renewal of the church but the redemption of the world. This is the kingdom of God breaking through in the transformation of people's lives.[78]

Some readers may ask similar questions as Wesley did about whether doing missional action as a sacrament means that people will be saved by works, but this is more about sanctification than justification. Rieger claims that this is more than just adding works of mercy to the list of acts of piety as means of grace that are available for Christians to access God. The danger, as it has been mentioned earlier, is that works of mercy—no matter how good the motives—can be channels through which oppression can follow. This is also true for works of piety. As one can read in feminist and other liberation theologies, it is possible for scripture to be interpreted in a way that reinforces

[79] Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions*, 32–33.

marginalization. However, Rieger argues if works of mercy and acts of piety are brought together into a dynamic relationship instead of being two isolated experiences, then there is the potential for transformation that moves beyond self-serving belief or practice. Ultimately, if prayer, reading scripture, and the sacraments are serving the self, then one is forming God in one's own image. If serving the poor and going on mission trips are experienced as one-way streets in which blessing flows from the affluent doer to the recipient, then it is well within the realm of possibility that the doer is shaping the other person in his or her image. One of the ways that this type of dynamic may be at work in a pilgrimage, or missional experience, is when people from affluent suburban communities set out with expectations about how the people they are serving should respond to what they do or are angry when they do not conform to those expectations.

It is important to make a distinction at this juncture. We have discussed the dangers of suburban Christians working with people who are under-resourced because it can be a one-way flow of resources and influence. The voice of the people who are in lower socio-economic communities is often overshadowed by the voice and desires of the people who come to serve them. This strikes the core of the issue of naming sought to address in this project. When one's point of view, or perspective, is raised above someone else's not because of they experience this reality but because their given privilege because of their socio-economic status, then that same colonial impulse still exists and must be addressed. Rieger pushes the reader to see that there must be a dynamic two-way relationship between people from various lower socio-economic backgrounds. The relationship is distorted when it consists of the affluent coming in and infusing resources into a situation and leaving with an affirmation, or feeling blessed,

from what they perceive God was able to accomplish through them. A bi-directional relationship allows for the sharing of resources but also for the more resourced participants to be influenced by the lives, stories and input of the people they have come to serve. They relinquish power and the assumption of dominance in order to embrace an openness to experience God and their neighbor in a new way in a new context through others involved in the situation. This abandoning of privileged power creates space for the once powerless the chance to discover the power they can use

Cultivating deeper relationships with people from different contexts can create the setting for deeper theological reflection and re-thinking about how God can influence one's lifestyle. It can be an opportunity for everyone involved to be reflective about their experience and assumptions about God's character and their critical opportunity to be affirming about each other's role in the relationship. This progression took place in John Wesley's life. As was stated earlier, his understanding of the means of grace began with prayer, scripture, Holy Communion, Christian conference, and so on, but over time he perceived that God also was at work in the acts of mercy. Getting the members of his societies out into the streets and visiting people who were sick, in prison, or struggling financially was a priority, especially as many in his bands were growing wealthier. Wesley's understanding of the power of serving alongside and with people in poverty did not stop there. He felt compelled to start medical clinics so that people could have access to medical care. He began to see the systemic realties that were facing people in England and he believed that it was the responsibility of God's people to get involved. If one takes seriously the means of grace and allows one's prayer and reading of scripture to be expanded by their conversation or experience of the other, then it is entirely possible that

one's understanding of God will expand instead of contract. Also, if one takes seriously the opportunity to learn from the people who are on the margins and acknowledge how their racial, gender, and cultural preferences can taint their perception of the other, then there can be a more meaningful and mutual relationship (or love of) their neighbor.

Kwok Pui-lan

So far, the theological foundations of the Family Missional Pilgrimage from the voices of White, educated men have been considered. I want to offer a different perspective from two female theologians: Kwok Pui-lan, an Asian feminist writing from a postcolonial perspective, and Traci West, an African American womanist theologian. The power of Kwok's perspective originates from her willingness to name and probe the internal tension of Christianity. Christianity has been formed and shaped in the fire of colonialism and the building of empires, beginning with Constantine and continuing to play its part of in the unfolding drama of the United States' global war on terror. Within this religion that has been enmeshed in the reality of empire, there also exists the resources for resistance.[79] Kwok names the paradoxical nature of the Christian canon, and argues that the structures and norms of Christianity reflect that same conflict. For her, if Christians are going to claim the means of grace that John Wesley lifted up and Joerg Rieger broadens, there has to be not only an awareness of the colonial impulse within the Christian religion, but an active resistance to this entrenched dominant mindset that is found in the scripture, in the theological tradition, and in the church's ecclesiology. Looking back on how this project originated, there were three educated, White male

[80] Kwok, 8.

pastors developing this idea. No other voices were included to negate any inherent bias or prejudice included in scriptures that were chosen, the methods that were used, and in the implementation of the project. Part of the journey of active resistance, or what Kwok names "postcolonial imagination," is to rediscover the mutuality that exited in the early church before it was coopted into the imperial agenda.[80] This is when Christianity moved out of the hands of the laity into the hands of bishops, deacons, and the male-dominated church hierarchy.[81]

Kwok then describes how not only did theology, Christology, and ecclesiology become subsumed into paternal hierarchy, but how war and conquest were spliced into the church's DNA. With the Roman Catholic Church's leadership involved in the crusades, Christianity is a militarized movement that developed rites and rituals to consecrate and confirm God's will and work forcefully in combatting anyone that stands in the way of the Christian kingdom.[82] These dynamics created the foundations for how Christian missionaries would imagine and engage indigenous persons locally and globally. In transmitting the Christian message, they were transmitting Western norms across cultures. It may have been the expectations of gender roles or the relationship of scripture to already established wisdom writing in that new context. All of this came to bear on the people they came to serve. The Middle Ages shaped and formed the ecclesial psych as leaders continued to imagine and engage the "savages" and "infidels" of Africa, The Far East, and The New World. In the time of John Wesley, the European church was trying to evangelize the Native Americans. Before one can really engage in a

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[81] Ibid. 22.

[82] Ibid., 12-13.

[83] Ibid., 13.

conversation about a postcolonial feminist view of the means of grace, a little insight into context will be necessary. If there were a time in which the fever and pulse of colonialism was high, it was in the time of John Wesley. England was entangled in its complicated relationship with the colonies in the New World and John Wesley, traveled to the colonies in hopes of helping evangelize the indigenous peoples. Again, this was a period of time when Christianity and the imperial will were fused. As highlighted in Chapter Two, these were times in which Euro-centrism and the subjugation of Native Americans was in full force. Women, especially, were suffering as the Christian missions were disrupting their social and cultural roles and re-establish androcentric, enlightened norms and attitudes.

It is also important to put into context John Wesley's context as he seeks to bring revival to the church and to find practices that could allow that to happen. The Church of England was birth from the English monarchy. King Henry VIII was looking for an ecclesiastical loophole to be able to divorce his wife, so he created the Church of England. It was a church in which only men could serve as priests and it was an institution that perpetuated the male-dominated, Euro-centric worldview. So, just a glimpse of the church from which the idea of the means of grace was mediated, should suggest caution and a willingness to question how they are defined and how they are used so that they will not be vehicles to mask the will to not value women or others from different social locations.

Postcolonial feminists would resist any use of scripture, the sacraments, prayer, acts of mercy, or serving the poor, that perpetuate violence, submission, oppression of the non-white, non-Western persons, especially women. The means of grace would need to

be used in ways that give people voice to describe their realities without the church, clerics, leaders, men, or anyone other privileged persons speaking over them or undermining their sense of who they are. Postcolonial critics would want to see freedom in interpreting and using the means of grace to mediate new meaning for traditionally oppressed persons. The Family Missional Pilgrimage is an attempt for all of the people involved in the project, suburban pilgrims and residents of Oak Cliff alike, to see each other and themselves as subject in their own story, not objects in someone else's narrative. In other words, the meaning of John Wesley, Jason Vickers, and Joerg Rieger, are parts of a larger conversation, but there must be space for non-white, differently educated, non-heterosexual, women to have a place at the table. Also, the conversation should not be one that is abstract but should be tactile and tangible because the realities of physical violence and emotional aggression are part of the suppressive culture that exists for men, women, and children whose voices are not heard. Jason Vickers refers to the early church in his argument for revitalization in the early church and how the means of grace mediated the Holy Spirit for the life-giving community and ministry of the early church community. Postcolonial feminists would ask if the revitalization of the church would return Christian community to a place of mutuality and equality that may have existed before Christianity became the imperial religion of Constantine and began to transform into a male-dominated, bureaucratic institution. In its essence, postcolonial feminism challenges any one group to speak in universal terms about truth.[83] For Kwok Pui-lan, as Traci West will echo: the truth and liberation come at the intersection of the particular social locations of all – especially the disenfranchised, oppressed, and marginalized.

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[84] Kwok, 49.

This is an important distinction that can help affluent understand why feminist political theology is important. Western Christianity has such sway in our society, so much of its beliefs and assumptions are treated as universal. In the abstract the colonizer and the colonized and informed by these values and philosophies, but when pilgrims are invited to account for the physical ways in which female bodies, and as we will discuss African American female bodies, are treated differently. Or, it may not be talking about generalizations but to have a conversation about how communities like Prosper and Oak Cliff are connected and how to resources flow in and out of those two communities. For example do the women of Oak Cliff travel to Prosper to clean homes? Or, do the men of Oak Cliff follow the economic in flows to Prosper to build homes. With the human capital traveling to Prosper from Oak Cliff, what kinds of resources return to Oak Cliff? How are these relationships imbalanced and how does the means of grace like the Family Missional Pilgrimage help voices to be heard and experiences shared and valued? It is making theology real and concrete that dominant colonialism is confronted and the realities that happen to people have to be accounted for outside of stereotypes and bias. Kwok's challenged the middle-class, White women whose priority tends to be gender oppression. When they share meals, or work together, or spend time with the women from Oak Cliff, how will they hear their stories? Will they make connections that will draw them into deeper conversations about how lesser resourced Mexican American women experience their lives and their realities? Through the guided format of the Family Missional Pilgrimage, both the affluent pilgrims and the residents of Oak Cliff can begin to interrogate some of the norms and biases that permeate and inform their relationships in hopes of creating space to listen and understand.

Traci West

Rieger explores how understanding working and standing in solidarity with the poor and marginalized can be a means of grace that can transform people's lives, the church, and the world by reshaping relationships. Kwok Pui-lan frames the conversation around postcolonial imagination and creating space to actively resist and subvert the personal and systemic structures and bias that continue to push down the poor, women, and other demographics, to continue to support White, educated, male dominance. Traci West takes the postcolonial conversation and speaks specifically to the issues that African American women endure when it comes to how they are oppressed emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and physically by North American dominant culture. In her work, she gives the reader one translation into how dialogue can build relationships across racial and socio-economic boundaries can be transformational not just in a personal space but also in the public forum. This dialogue must take place between a diversity of people working together to shape a shared ethic that defines what it means to live in a society of dignity and justice.[84] By exposing suburban Christians to missional pilgrimage, the hope is to initiate social engagement to sparking postcolonial imagination in the pilgrims that can form the basis for deeper and more reflective conversations. This dialogical method can create a new framework for pilgrims to hear and be energized to act with the individuals and families they encounter.

West believes that the universal claims made by many Christians—mostly from perspectives of privilege—do not include the voices of the people in the context they are

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[84] Traci West, preface in *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), xv.

addressing.[85] Without testing those claims against the particular experiences of people in the relevant context, then the claims can be irrelevant, paternalistic, and harmful.[86] She uses the example of one of the Twentieth Century's "great thinkers," Reinhold Niebuhr, to illustrate that even a leading liberal theologian taking on the relevant issues of racism in his day can miss the reality of what is happening in the lives of individuals living in Harlem.[87] In Niebuhr's view, one of the contributing factors to racism and the struggle to adequately deal with prejudice was pride.[88] Pride and the hunger for power were at the heart of the struggle for power and domination of Blacks by Whites.[89] West argues that Niebuhr's assertion may make sense from his perspective, but when held up against the story of a dentist in Harlem who keeps her practice open because she takes pride in her work, then the universality of Niebuhr's claim loses its punch.[90] For the dentist, the pride that she takes could also be an invaluable resource to Blacks who were taking pride in their work and in their part in the fight against racism.[91]

The core motive for the missional pilgrimage is to decolonize, or attempt to subvert, the patterns of suburban Christians who, because of their power and privileged place in society, often universally define and label the reality of people who are considered "poor." This experience offers the pilgrims the chance to meet real people

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[85] Traci West, preface in *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*(Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), xv.

[86] Ibid., 13.

[87] Ibid., 3.

[88] Ibid., 7.

[89] Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter, 7.*

[90] Ibid., 12.

[91] Ibid.

with fewer resources and have real names and real lives. It gives pilgrims a chance to move beyond labels and stereotypes to meet actual people from lower socio-economic backgrounds with dreams and their own stories. Whatever universal claims they may have about the poor, the missional pilgrimage gives them a means of grace through which they build relationships that can lay the foundation to resist those assumptions and stereotypes. It allows those who have been named, labeled, and made part of a narrative in which they are the objects, not the subjects, to define themselves, introduce their own language, describe their own realities without others overpower them or drowning them out. Therefore the posture for the privileged is one of humility, while for those who are traditionally oppressed, they experience empowerment.

For example, one of the responses from a potential pilgrim expressed concern because he wanted "to see the good in people but often I see the system being taken advantage of." This is a negative statement about a community about which the pilgrim knows little or nothing. While it is not a universal claim, it does lack the acknowledgement that there are families and individuals not trying to manipulate the public benefit system for their advantage. This is an example of how media and partisan politics continue to reinforce colonized thinking in people who are privileged in North American society. There are families working and contributing without the help of government assistance. West suggests in her conversation about Niehbur's frustration that, in his eyes, the Black community was not standing up and resisting White oppression. In reality, there were stories unfolding of resistance but they were happening in the YWCA and other places where Blacks had the psychological, physical, and

spiritual space to gather and work their strategy out.[92] When there are generalizations of passivity and a lack of moral engagement about a certain group of people abound or operate on a false paradigm used to describe the realities of the oppressed, then those claims must be held suspect because they do not take into account the exceptions that exist.[93]

In concept, the first chapter frames the core of the anticipated accomplishment. By putting suburban Christians in contact with individuals and families who live in poverty, they can build a clearer understanding of the reality in which under-resourced individuals live. By hearing stories over time, the suburban pilgrims can begin to see how injustice, oppression, and marginalization push against the assumptions and presuppositions that people of privilege hold about the life and reality of the under-resourced.

For example, suburbs can be generally politically conservative communities. As one pastor put it, every time the media talks about immigration, they choose images that may not be representative of the diversity of the immigrant community. If the viewers who are exposed to these images do not have relationships or experience to counter the media bias, then those images may reinforce stereotypes. By going to Oak Cliff and potentially having conversations and building relationships with immigrants, or someone whose family is impacted by immigration, there can be resistance to assumptions and stereotypes of the dominant culture. As Christians, changing the way one sees another person and challenges the universal claims and the language used to frame them should impact how we do church. Because White privilege permeates every part of life, then the

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[92] Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*, 17.

[93] Ibid.

church is not exempt from passively or proactively perpetuating racist, sexist, and classist ideologies. There are rituals like Holy Communion that, if not critically understood, can become opportunities for prejudiced and elitist transgressions to be easily dismissed and not opposed.

In West's conversation about universal and particular, Trevor Hudson's point about encounter and reflection. For suburban Christians, it could be easy for them to make a pilgrimage to a place like Oak Cliff and truly listen to the pain and experience of suffering from the people they meet and still miss the opportunity to really hear the discriminations or violations that may be at work in their lives. Because they, like the commissioner that West points out in the issue about Black women being strip searched more than any other group at O'Hare Airport, they may have a default reaction to separate the particular accounts that they hear and the universal claims that have been reinforced in their Christian suburban worldview.[94] This disconnect may not allow them to understand that there is a role for them to play in standing in solidarity with people who are being victimized and violated.

Conclusion

In preparation for the Family Mission Pilgrimage, valuable insight was obtained into the biblical, historical, and theological foundations for the project. In the biblical foundations, it was discovered how God's power to name Jacob, reflected both Jacob's character and the type of relationship God was going to have with Jacob and the people of Israel. In Mark Seven, Jesus resists the use the power of his social location and gender

[94] Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*, 45.

to embarrass and send of a Syrophoencian woman that came seeking healing for her daughter. The biblical foundation set the priority for the project which was giving affluent Christians the chance to acknowledge and withhold their assumed power to name others, and empower those who were systematically marginalized to claim their voice and describe their reality. A historical context was provided to show that pilgrimages have existed well before they started showing up in Christianity.

The narrative of Augusta Helena and her pilgrimage to Palestine in the Fourth Century was engaged. In her journey, like the pilgrimages of affluent pilgrims from Prosper, there is not only a spiritual component that exists, but they bring the power of social location. That social location has been one that has benefited from the systematic oppression and marginalization of those who are not White, middle-class, and Christian. It is important that pilgrims recognize the dual nature of what they bring into a pilgrimage like this because it is that self-awareness that opens the door for them to exercise humility and restraint as they listen to the stories and experiences of people who are not like them. This will allow them the opportunity to hear that that values, experiences, and stereotypes that they thought were universal are not.

John Wesley, the founder of United Methodism, traveled a great deal in his personal life to work out theological questions that he had. As he began to lead societies and bands, he also asked them to travel, not necessarily to the other side of the world, but down the street or across town to find the broken, the poor, and the lame. He believed that it was incumbent upon Christians to practice acts of mercy as an expression of their faith. The people of societies listened, and as they did their work, John Wesley and his followers realized that it was about more than charity. There were systemic issues at play

and so they began setting up clinics and places for children to learn to read. These acts of mercy were part of what Wesley called the means of grace, ordinary ways that God's grace flowed into people's lives and into the world. Jason Vickers and Joerg Rieger see the means of grace as essential to the renewal of the church. Joerg Rieger orients the reader to understand the means of grace as a way of talking about building deeper relationships between people from different socio-economic realities. The dynamism of the works of piety and works of mercy can become transformational on individual levels but also on systemic levels.

The first step of that transformational process was tested by seeing if the Family Mission Weekend could influence negative attitudes of "colonized" minds and empower those that have been diminished or ignored by affluent Christians. Kwok Pui-lan offered an analysis of what postcolonial feminists would ask when it comes to using the means of grace and the potential implication of engaging people something like the Family Missional Pilgrimage. Traci West gives another liberative perspective to the conversation by warning the reader that if one does not test universal claims with the particular experiences of people in a certain context, then one runs the risk of those universal claims perpetuating the paternalism and oppression they may be trying to stop.

In the same way, building meaningful relationships can deconstruct prejudice and stereotypes. It can create the relationships and the space that can allow the critique of middle class normativity embedded in individual stories. This means testing the words, phrases, and assumptions that exist to keep White superiority and prejudice in place. This is a part of the transformational potential of leaving one's community and building relationships with people from different socio-economic backgrounds. With these

foundational concepts in mind, it was believed that by going on this weekend pilgrimage to Oak Cliff, Texas, the suburban pilgrims would leave a context that they knew so well and engage in meaningful activities that fostered relationships with the under-resourced church and community members of Oak Cliff. This engagement was believed to be a means of grace that would lead to the pilgrims discovering that there are other people behind the labels and stereotypes than the ones they may help perpetuate.

While it is not within the scope of this project, the concept is embraced that this transformational experience will energize the congregation not only to recognize its disconnectedness from the under-resourced in the community of Prosper, but also help them realize how disconnected they are from their neighbors in their own subdivisions. This would mean that the pilgrims would be more likely to seek and participate in other mission activities in their community to serve alongside and stand in solidarity with the under-resourced, and that they would look for and organize opportunities to reach out and serve their affluent neighbors as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

A Family Mission Pilgrimage was employed to test the hypothesis that taking middle-class Christians out of their suburban context and intentionally building relationships with people from different social locations could be a means of grace that may diminish negative attitudes and deconstruct negative stereotypes. By diminishing prejudice and stereotypes, suburban affluent Christians may be more open to developing fuller and more authentic relationships with people outside of their own socio-economic reality, and be more aware of the disconnection that exists with people in their own church and local suburban community. The hope was that these authentic relationships would allow suburban Christians to see beyond their assumptions and labels of the "poor" and provide them with the tools to see other neighbors they may have as real people with names, dreams and hopes.

The Family Mission Weekend was a collaborative mission opportunity involving a suburban United Methodist Church, Oak Cliff United Methodist Church, and Perkins School of Theology. Oak Cliff United Methodist Church is an urban church that has a predominantly Hispanic congregation that serves an area of Oak Cliff that has many African Americans and Latinos living at or below poverty. Oak Cliff United Methodist Church offers services in English and Spanish, as well as bilingual services. Tyler Street United Methodist Church is primarily a Caucasian congregation that offers services in

English and has organized a Spanish-speaking congregation to reach out to the primarily Latino community that has transitioned into the Oak Cliff area. Tyler Street also offers housing for mission groups that come to the community at the "C2K House." This house holds forty-eight beds along with showers, bathrooms, a kitchen and a large meeting area. Dr. Joerg Rieger represented Perkins School of Theology as the Wendland-Cook Endowed Professor of Constructive Theology. He also has done extensive work leading teams of seminarians from Perkins in mission to West Dallas, a poor Latino community adjacent to Oak Cliff.

The qualitative research methods such as questionnaires, interviews, pre-tests, post-tests and journaling were used to measure any change in attitude. There were five main components to the Family Mission Weekend: orientation meetings, readings, interviews, interaction and teaching session with Dr. Rieger. The results of this project were to be qualitative in nature and the data was intended to be triangulated using second hand data about attitudes of middle-class Americans toward the poor, journal entries through the process and post interviews with two or three families that participated in the mission experience. Specifically, the method used was the invitation to, planning of, and participation in a Family Missional Pilgrimage from the suburban community of Prosper to the inner city of Dallas.[1] In the final journal entry after the weekend experience, the pilgrims were asked if they would like to revise any of their thoughts, or statements in their previous journal entries. Two or three pilgrims An interview was conducted with Dr. Elaine Heath, the Creless Professor of Evangelism at Perkins School of Theology, to

[1] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2005), 113-117.

give a point of comparison about how a pilgrimage can be accomplished and what kind of results can be seen as a result of taking a pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage project unfolded with the following stages:

1) Stepping forward.

Several announcements in church service in October and November were made leading up to the pilgrimage. Potential pilgrims were invited to sign up by calling the church office and registering with the church administrator. When they signed up they were sent the first set of journal questions to complete before the first introductory meeting.

2) Introductions.

Two introductory meetings were scheduled so that if someone has a conflict, there would be a second option. They were required to only attend one introductory meeting. The two introductory meetings were scheduled immediately after church services on December 2, 2012 and December 9, 2012. In each meeting, the potential pilgrims were informed of the purpose of the Family Missional Pilgrimage, allowed to review the tentative itinerary for pilgrimage, and given a copy of chapter one of Trevor Hudson's *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion* to read and review in the meeting. After they were given a chance to reflect upon the article and have group conversation, the researcher introduced the second chapter of the book and asked them to read it before the next meeting. The pilgrims were asked to review chapters one and two of Trevor Hudson's book at home and complete the journal questions by the following Tuesday.

3) Preparation.

After completing the two readings, attending one introductory meeting and answering the journal questions before and after the introductory meetings, the pilgrims were asked to prepare for the Family Mission Pilgrimage by completing another set of journal questions the week prior to the pilgrimage and the week following the weekend.

4) Encounter in Oak Cliff

During the Family Missional Pilgrimage, the pilgrims were responsible for paying $50 per person per night. This covered the cost of lodging at the C2K house, the five meals and the materials to do the work. Also, they were responsible for providing their own transportation to Tyler Street United Methodist Church, the church that administrates the C2K house. The researcher required that the pilgrims prepare and eat meals with members from Oak Cliff United Methodist Church. During the weekend, there was time for icebreaker games and conversation. Also, there was time set aside for a teaching session with Dr. Rieger to help process their readings and experiences through the lens of liberation theology.

Finally, after working and eating with members of Oak Cliff United Methodist Church and Tyler Street United Methodist Church, pilgrims and residents of Oak Cliff worshipped together on Sunday morning at Oak Cliff United Methodist Church. They celebrated bilingual worship and the children participated in the children's activities during worship.

5) Follow-up and Assessment.

All of the families in the group were selected to contact and perform follow-up interviews within a week of the pilgrimage. The results of the project were measured through the negative and positive words used by the pilgrims to describe their experience. The researcher had follow up conversations with Dr. Rieger and the associate pastor of Oak Cliff United Methodist Church to verify if they believed the Family Missional Pilgrimage had a positive, negative or neutral outcome. Finally, the impact of the project was assessed by recording any desires or thoughts about the next steps with any other missional activity. The long-term hope was that the people of Prosper would be more aware of the prejudice and stereotypes that they bring with people from varying socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, it was hoped that they would be more open to continuing the relationship with Oak Cliff and look locally to engage their neighbors in meaningful relationships that could lead to congregational and community transformation. Ultimately, this would be a process that would impact all parties – those who come to serve and those with whom they come to serve – but also transform how people perceive and relate to one another whether they are from suburbia or the inner city.

Expected Results and Inherent Risks

The Family Mission Weekend was the proposed method of introducing suburban pilgrims to meaningful interactions with under-resourced church and community members of Oak Cliff. The desired outcome was that the negative attitudes the pilgrims

may have about people from different socio-economic backgrounds would be influenced in a positive manner. Inherent in this project are important risks.

The expectation was for the pilgrims to bring their anxieties about the pilgrimage to the weekend. Additionally, it was hoped that as they interacted with the church and community members that they would experience the tension of whatever universal claims, or stereotypes, they brought to the weekend. Then, through shared projects they may learn personal stories and individual experiences that would test the generalizations they had. On some level, it was hoped that the pilgrims would be able to rethink some of these attitudes and stereotypes.

Through this acknowledgement of how building relationships with people from different socio-economic backgrounds can be a step toward transformation, this experience can be a step toward helping see the beyond the labels that are used for the poor, and to also be made aware of what labels and generalizations they bring to those relationships. This learning created energy and excitement about learning more and building deeper relationships that can lead to making changes in the way they live their individual lives in individual relationships and commitment to serving alongside those they may consider poor, or under-resourced. It was my hope that the relationships would lead some to advocate for greater change in their community and society.

Finally, my hope was that this experience would energize the pilgrims and the suburban church by giving them some tools to reach out into their local communities. Also, this experience could help them to build deeper relationships with the under-resourced and marginalized in a way that could change the culture of the suburban church to make it more open to the diversity in the community. Hopefully, this openness will

play a part in also helping the suburban pilgrims and congregation to be more sensitive and aware of the needs of all of their neighbors, even the affluent ones.

Inherent Risks

First, it was a risk for the church members and community members to participate in this pilgrimage. Hosting and working alongside suburban pilgrims who may or may not be aware of their negative attitudes or behaviors could have been painful. If you are an immigrant, or do not speak English, how do you relate to people who represent the people who believe you should leave the country, or that you should be able to speak English before you can be a citizen of the United States? It was a risk to invite suburban affluent Christians into their church and community because of the power dynamics that are involved in building relationships with individuals and families that represent the majority views that seem to work against them. For parents, it was a big risk exposing their children to circumstances that may be awkward and painful.

For the pastors and leadership of the church in Oak Cliff, there were risks in allowing a group of suburban pilgrims come to your church and serve alongside your congregation. What kinds of expectations will the group bring? Will they try to partner with Oak Cliff church members to accomplish tasks, or will they come and try to take over the projects? Will they honor and treat the church members and community members as equals, or will they treat them with condescension and belittle them? Also, the Oak Cliff pastors faced spiritual risks. How will the pastors frame this kind of interaction? Is it one in which one group of church people with resources come representing God wanting to help the lost and poor people with nothing to offer? Or, can

the pastor frame the event as one where a group is coming to serve alongside us in getting these projects done and this is what we have to teach them and help them grow? And, if that is the way the pastor frames it, but that is not the way that the suburban church behaves during the project, how will the pastor articulate what has happened.

There were risks for the pilgrims. While they were assuming that there were physical risks to their safety, their greatest risks may have been emotional and spiritual. Being willing to step out of one's dominant culture and expose oneself and family to a different place and a different culture is a risk. How does one react if they encounter the emotional stress of trying to communicate with someone who comes from a different background, has different life experiences, and may speak another language? As a child or teenager that has grown up in a place that has little diversity on any level, how would one negotiate getting to know other kids? As a parent, how would one begin to put into words the assumptions and presuppositions that, because of your context, maybe you have never had to explain before?

For the pilgrims there is also a financial risk involved. The pilgrims were asked to invest $50 per night per person for two nights of lodging and food. For a family of four that meant that they would invest $400 for the missional pilgrimage. While suburban families will invest incredible amounts of money in extracurricular activities and in vacation, for them to invest an amount such as this for a weekend was significant.

This was a risk for the suburban congregation as a whole. Taking seriously the call to serve and stand alongside those who have been traditionally marginalized is not the most popular message in suburban churches. With so much energy in providing professional music, powerful preaching, and exceptional children and youth programs,

little if any significant effort is given to building relational ministries with the individuals and families that are under-resourced. Is the church willing to risk moving beyond the token mission and community service ministries that can be a part of some suburban congregations and do ministry that may not be as socially acceptable in their context?

Finally, it was a risk for me. In some ways, this was sharing a very personal part of my life with people who may or may not value it as much as I do, or experience the life-changing grace that I have through experiences such as these. And, not just that the pilgrims may not have experienced the potential and power of this type of experience, but because of what I proposed, I ran the risk of reinforcing attitudes and behaviors that were the opposite of my intention. Along those lines, I did not want to create an experience that could emotionally and spiritually hurt people and that was one of the risks in this project.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The hypothesis that the Family Mission Weekend was created to treat was: When affluent Christians invest time and energy into relationships with individuals and families from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, they can become aware of their privilege and power in a way that allows them to relinquish or suspend that power so that others may claim their power to name their life and reality. The researcher organized and implemented the Family Missional Pilgrimage for affluent Christians in communities like Prosper, Texas to travel to the urban Latino community of Oak Cliff, Texas. There they worked, ate and worshipped alongside members of a United Methodist Church in Oak Cliff, as well as other community residents. This chapter represents the field experience and results of the project.

I made several announcements during the weekly worship services at the suburban church in Prosper. The Family Missional Pilgrimage was set for January 11, 12, and 13 of 2012. When the people contacted the church office to sign up for the event, they were asked to complete their first set of journal questions before they attended the orientation meeting. Two orientation meetings were scheduled in case an individual or family could not attend one or the other.

Initially, forty-one people signed up for the Family Missional Pilgrimage and seventeen, not including my family, went. There were two orientations offered to pilgrims before they went on the pilgrimage weekend. Two families dropped out because of the cost of the trip, two because of illness, and one because of a scheduling conflict. One individual approached me after signing up and informed me that she could not go on the trip because her spouse felt like it was too dangerous. This decreased the number of individuals of all ages to twenty-one, and excluding my family and me left seventeen. There were twenty-seven attendees at the first introductory meeting on December 2, 2012. Of those, there were seventeen adults, three teenagers and seven children. The second introductory meeting had two adults and two children attend the meeting.

In the development of the project, a need was found for at least five journal entries for sufficient data to support any change, positive or negative, in attitudes about the people the pilgrims traveled to serve. Those who attended orientations were inconsistent in doing the assigned readings. Only a few submitted their journal entries and they gave very little feedback, sometimes only one sentence. As I continued to follow up with pilgrims about completing their entries, there was little improvement. In each meeting, the potential pilgrims were informed of the purpose of the missional pilgrimage, allowed to review the tentative itinerary for the pilgrimage, and given a copy of Chapter One of *A Mile in My Shoes* to read and review before the orientation meeting.[1] They were asked to complete the next set of journal entries before being given Chapter Two of the book to read.

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[1] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2005), 17.

Due to the number of people unable to attend the Family Missional Pilgrimage in January because of scheduling and sickness, I considered a second missional pilgrimage in March, after community sports seasons ended. This would allow the collection of more data to substantiate any conclusion for the hypothesis. Without the journal data, I decided, in consultation with his peer group mentor, to shift from journal entries to open-ended interviews. So each family, excluding mine, was interviewed prior to the weekend and after the missional pilgrimage.

In the pre-interviews, there were negative words used to express concern about personal safety going on the pilgrimage and two explicit negative comments made about the people the pilgrims were going to interact with on the pilgrimage. Out of the thirty-one people who attended the first orientation meeting for the Family Missional Pilgrimage, eighteen completed one survey and or participated in an interview before the pilgrimage. Out of those eighteen responses, seven were negative, indicating a 39% negative attitude about personal safety on the trip and the people to be met. The mildest of the negative responses was "nervous about meeting other people." Five of the responses mentioned safety as a concern: "The unknown and protection of my daughter," "safety for my family," "scared," "I was kind of scared that it was going to be bad people," and "I just didn't know if it was going to be a safe place." The last response came from a journal entry in which they were asked if they felt there would be any resistance to the Family Mission Pilgrimage. This pilgrim's response was: "Yes—my own resistance because of the line of work that I am in. I want to see the good in people but often I see the system being taken advantage of." One out of the seven responses came from a nine-year old girl and four were given by thirteen to fourteen-year-olds. The

remaining two young people did not indicate any negative attitude, use negative words or phrases in their responses.

My peer group made several observations about why there may have been so few negative responses. First, because I was the pastor for the pilgrims, their desire to meet any perceived expectations from him kept them from honestly acknowledging negative attitudes in interviews. In fact, one pilgrim responded to a journal question about the reason for their attendance with "because I wanted to support PC" (my nickname). Second, because children and teenagers are not always aware of the power dynamics present among adults, they may have shared their anxiety and concerns more honestly. Of the seven negative responses, only two came from adults and those were journal entries and not a face-to-face interview response. The lack of face-to-face context may have also encouraged sharing of negative thoughts.

There were three places that pilgrims were going to work alongside church and community members. The first was the repainting of a widow's home within a mile of the church. The second was cleaning and minor repairs at Nueva Esperanza United Methodist Church, a satellite campus of the church in Oak Cliff in the nearby neighborhood of West Dallas. Finally, they were going to clean and organize on the church campus in Oak Cliff. Because of inclement weather, I found out that they would not be able to paint the widow's home. A last-minute scheduling conflict changed the itinerary again so that the pilgrims would not be able to work at Nueva Esperanza. This meant that all of the activities and interactions would be based at the United Methodist Church in Oak Cliff.

The consequences of these alterations impacted the experiences of the pilgrims. Not only did they not get the opportunity to serve and experience different venues in the Oak Cliff and West Dallas communities, but the leaders of Oak Cliff and Tyler Street had to scramble to find different projects around the church campus. This also made the ratio of pilgrims to church and community members from Oak Cliff more uneven and limited the time the pilgrims would spend around different people in the community. The pilgrims learned when they arrived that they would be involved in several projects around the church: helping take down Christmas decorations, cleaning the sanctuary, cleaning out an old storage closet in the downstairs basement area, and cleaning out and giving a storage closet in the education building its first reorganization in at least ten years.

The group arrived at the C2K house at Tyler Street United Methodist Church between 5:00 pm and 6:00 pm, Friday evening. As the pilgrims arrived they unloaded their things and placed them in their assigned sleeping arrangements. The Director of the C2K house arrived and, before preparing dinner, gave the group a brief orientation to their living quarters. Later, the associate pastor of the church and one church member shared the evening meal with us. After the meal, the associate pastor led the pilgrims in a brief devotion. He gave his personal testimonial about how he came to the United Methodist Church out of the Assembly of God and how excited he was that God was bringing the two churches together. After the associate pastor closed the devotion in prayer, the group finished dinner and the devotion, cleaned up the kitchen and dining area, and went to bed. When the group got up the next morning, the Director of the C2K House provided fresh fruit, cereal, bagels, and fruit juices for the team. The team ate and, after going over the new itinerary for the day, drove over to the church in Oak Cliff.

Once the group arrived in Oak Cliff, the pastor and associate pastor greeted us in the parking lot. The group made its way to the sanctuary, where it was introduced to church members who had come to help. There were approximately eight church members from Oak Cliff and eight kids from the church. As one of the suburban pilgrims noted in their post-interview, they wished there were more church members so that they could have had more interaction and built more relationships. The men from the Prosper group worked to clean the closet in the education building, with an older White member who had been a part of the Oak Cliff church from when the community was a primarily White, middle-class suburb, several decades prior. It is now an urban community, primarily first- and second-generation Latino.

The suburban pilgrims that worked on cleaning the sanctuary and taking down the decorations from Christmas had the opportunity to work alongside Hispanic members of the church. Some of their tasks included taking down the Christmas tree, cleaning the carpet and polishing the pews. The third group worked downstairs. Though they had no interaction with adults from the Oak Cliff church and community, some of the children from the church helped some of the younger pilgrims carry out-of-date carbonated drinks out to the trashcan. As they carried them out, some of the drinks fell and exploded. Soon, both the suburban and urban kids were exploding drinks on the parking lot pavement and occasionally trying to explode them against the dumpster in hopes of getting the others wet.

Other pilgrims worked with church members to make lunch. One pilgrim learned that some of the women of Oak Cliff had gone to the church in Prosper to cater an event some time ago. During the preparation of the food, the other adults gathered at the tables

and began to talk. The associate pastor and I helped to translate some of those conversations. Both the kids from Oak Cliff and Prosper began to play together inside while waiting for the food. Some of them played video games on their phones together some played hide-and-seek in the church and others played soccer. Once the meal was ready, everyone gathered and mingled at the tables and talked while they ate. Many continued the conversations they had started while they were waiting to eat.

Even though I had not discussed it with the pastor and associate pastor, they created an opportunity for the people from the church in Oak Cliff and the suburban pilgrims to share in Holy Communion. The pastor and associate pastor performed the liturgy and invited everyone to share in the moment together. Once Communion was finished, the pilgrims and church members shared in cleaning up after the meal and returned to finish up their projects. Once the projects were completed, the pilgrims asked me to give them a tour of the community and to show them where I had lived when I had first come to work in the adjacent community of West Dallas. I obliged and showed them the house I lived in for almost two years. After the tour was finished, they returned to the C2K house to have dinner and prepare for the teaching session with Dr. Joerg Rieger. Again, the Director of the C2K House prepared the meal with the pilgrims while they showered. At this meal, there were no other church members or community members from Oak Cliff. Dr. Rieger arrived and shared in the meal with the group, then had a conversation with the pilgrims for about an hour. The pilgrims had read a portion of his book, *Travel*, and he talked about how such experiences can challenge how people think about God and interact with others. At the end of his talk, the pilgrims were given a chance to ask questions and interact. He offered to come to the church at Prosper and

continue to help them process how such experiences could help people grow in their faith. After the teaching session, the pilgrims cleaned up from the meal and went to bed.

On Sunday morning, the pilgrims got up and had breakfast. Because it was Sunday, their last day, they packed up their belonging and cleaned the C2K house. Then, they loaded up to go to church service at the church in Oak Cliff. One meal that was not planned but impacted the outcome of the project was lunch after church on the Sunday morning. After the service in Oak Cliff was over, the pilgrims were free to leave. Three families went to a nearby Mexican restaurant to have lunch together. The associate pastor and his family joined them. While there, the associate pastor and pilgrims talked about opportunities to partner in the future, perhaps by having the youth groups from both churches do things together, or if Oak Cliff churchgoers came to the church in Prosper to help it reach out to Latinos in its community. They traded contact information so they could continue the conversation after the weekend. In the post-interview, one pilgrim noted that because the associate pastor interacted with the pilgrims on Friday night, most of the day on Saturday, and on Sunday morning, the group felt very comfortable with him, like they had learned a lot about the Oak Cliff community and church, and able to work together in the future.

Other post-interviews gave positive reactions to the Family Mission Pilgrimage. One of the pilgrims who was concerned about safety responded that it "wasn't that bad at all." The child that expressed that she was "scared" responded that it was not as scary as she thought it was going to be. As I mentioned earlier, some of the pilgrims worked with Oak Cliff church members, they learned that one of the women had helped cater an event at the church in Prosper to make money for a United Methodist community center near

Oak Cliff. Much like the relationship between these two congregations and communities, the economic and systemic connections that exist between suburban and urban communities can be overlooked or undervalued. It was interesting that it was the residents of Oak Cliff that had to remind the pilgrimage from Prosper. It was a piece of the church's story that was forgotten or not important enough to talk about, it was the residents who benefitted financially from their relationship that remembered.

While the focus was on developing meaningful relationships with the people in the church and community in Oak Cliff, several pilgrims in their post-interviews said that they enjoyed getting to know the other pilgrims involved in the missional weekend. One of the families from the pilgrimage noted that they had reached out to the associate pastor in Oak Cliff to talk about activities the two youth groups could do together. Another pilgrim said they had "liked" the associate pastor on Facebook. Finally, a family shared that they were going to plan a reunion gathering for the pilgrims and to invite the associate pastor and his family to come and be a part of it. This was a sign of building relationships, but my hope would be that there would come a time when they would invite other church members to a gathering such as this.

Due to the limitations of data because of the small number of pilgrims and the inability to organize a second weekend, I met with Dr. Rieger and that associate pastor to get their insights, in hopes of triangulating his findings. The post-interviews with the Oak Cliff associate pastor yielded several insights key to the project outcomes. First, his church members told him it meant a great deal to his church members that people from a suburban church made the effort to come to their community, learn their names, and listen to their stories. It was "empowering" for them. Also, they felt like the suburban

pilgrims came with no expectations, which made it easier and less intimidating for the people of his church to work alongside them. He reported that the weekend gave the members of his congregation "confidence" in interacting with other suburban groups that may come to serve. He did acknowledge that he believed one of the shortcomings of the experience was the lack of significant time together. Since it was only a weekend and there was inclement weather, the two congregations did not have a lot of time to really strengthen their relationships.

The associate pastor noted that after the Family Missional Pilgrimage, two of the men involved in the weekend had come back to Oak Cliff and done work at the church. One of the families involved in the weekend had invited him and his family to dinner on several occasions. The father of this family had also called the associate pastor to ask his guidance on workplace situations concerning people of Latino heritage.

The final tool for measurement was a follow-up survey sent to all the pilgrims, except my family and me. Out of the seventeen surveys that were dispersed, four were returned, a 23% response rate. The survey used seven statements, listed below:

1. The Family Mission was a positive experience for our family.
2. The Family Mission Weekend gave my family an opportunity to spend time getting to know people from different socio-economic communities.
3. I was concerned about issues of safety before the Family Mission Weekend.
4. I had some concern about the people I would encounter on the Family Mission Weekend.
5. After going on the Family Mission Weekend, I learned that some of the concerns and anxiety I had were unfounded.
6. After going on the Family Mission Pilgrimage, I was not concerned about the people I met.

7. Going on the Family Mission Pilgrimage encouraged me to build relationships with individuals and families form lower socio-economic backgrounds in my local community, or to continue my relationship with the church in Oak Cliff.

The pilgrims could choose one of the following responses:

Disagree Somewhat Agree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

The responses were as follows:

Statement 1: 4 Agree
Statement 2: 4 Agree
Statement 3: 1 Agree, 1 N/A, 2 Disagree
Statement 4: 1 Disagree, 1 Somewhat Disagree, 2 Somewhat Agree
Statement 5: 1 Agree, 1 Somewhat Agree, 2 N/A
Statement 6: 4 Agree
Statement 7: 2 Somewhat Agree, 2 Agree

Of the responses to the follow-up survey, 100% agreed that the weekend was a positive experience that allowed them to spend time getting to know people from different socio-economic backgrounds. Only one responder acknowledged concern(s) about issues of safety about the Family Mission Pilgrimage. There was one N/A or not applicable, while two responders indicated they had no safety concerns. With the statement about concerns about the people they would encounter on the pilgrimage, one disagreed, one somewhat disagreed, and two somewhat agreed. This meant that three of the four admitted concern on some level. When asked if "some of the concerns and anxiety [they] had were unfounded," two of the responders circled not applicable, one agreed, and one somewhat agreed. So, for one responder, there were still some concerns that they had even after the Family Mission Pilgrimage. Statement six was "After going on the Family Mission Pilgrimage, I was not concerned about the people I met." Only one responder disagreed; the remaining three acknowledged at least some concern, and 100% of acknowledged they were not concerned with the people they met during the

pilgrimage. The final statement was formed to assess the likelihood that, after the pilgrimage, the pilgrims would be motivated to either continue their relationship with the church in Oak Cliff or seek out opportunities to build relationships with the under-resourced in the Prosper community. All of the responses were positive. Two pilgrims agreed that they felt encouraged by the pilgrimage "to build relationships with individuals and families form lower socio-economic backgrounds in their local community, or to continue my relationship with the church in Oak Cliff." The other two somewhat agreed.

Outcomes

Before I begin talking about possible conclusions that can be drawn from this particular project, I must acknowledge that the amount of data I was able to gather was statistically insignificant. This makes it incredibly different, if not impossible to judge whether the project created a context in which the power of suburban Christians in relationship to the under-resourced and disenfranchised was acknowledged or identified for the sake of affluent pilgrims opting for behaviors that do not perpetuate the oppression and marginalization of others.

The pre-interviews and journal entries showed negative attitudes about the pilgrimage because of concerns about personal safety and the people the pilgrims were going to meet. A minority of pilgrims had such negative feedback but it does show that such negative attitudes exist. One does have to take into account the bias intrinsic in the process due to pre-existing relationships between the pilgrims and me: I served as their spiritual leader. Most of the negative emotions expressed were from children, who might not recognize the bias or power dynamics involved. In the post-pilgrimage conversation

with the associate pastor of the church in Oak Cliff, he felt that the suburban pilgrims came with few expectations and were open to the members of his church. He did state that more time together would have been better because it would have given both his church members and the suburban pilgrims time to build deeper relationships. The associate pastor reported that one of the outcomes of the mission pilgrimage were continuing relationships between some of the pilgrims who worked at the church in Oak Cliff and the associate pastor, which had manifested in three ways. First, one of the pilgrim families had invited him to their community. Second, two pilgrims had returned to Oak Cliff to do some more work. Third, one of the suburban pilgrims had contacted the pastor for advice about how to deal with several employee situations that had to do with people from a different cultural context.

The third tool for triangulating the data for the project, follow-up surveys, showed negative attitudes the pilgrims acknowledged going into the Family Mission Pilgrimage. Even though the results were statistically miniscule, the four responses also acknowledged that the project impacted their negative assumptions about safety and the people they met in Oak Cliff. It also showed that the project motivated the pilgrims to continue their relationship with the church in Oak Cliff or get involved in building deeper relationships with their neighbors in Prosper from different socio-economic backgrounds.

In the next chapter, I will discuss what conclusions can be drawn from the outcomes of this project, how it has affected him, and what he would do differently if he had the chance to do it again in the future.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

The Journey to Project Implementation

In retrospect, the five-year journey it took to accomplish this project has not only been about constructing the Family Missional Pilgrimage, but also about navigating a personal pilgrimage. It has taught me a lot about grief, gratitude, and perseverance. In this chapter, first, I am going to discuss the conclusion of the project and the results of the project. Also, I will include an outcomes and reflections from a pilgrimage organized by Dr. Elaine Heath, professor at Perkins School of Theology. Her insight and experience with other pilgrimages will broaden this conversation about pilgrimage. Through it all, though, I am extremely grateful for all of the people that have been a part of this process and how their participation shaped the outcome of this project and the impact of their investment in my and my family. Church members from First United Methodist Church, Prosper United Methodist Church, and Argyle United Methodist Church have been a part of the journey. The pilgrims, the pastors, the men and women of Oak Cliff, my wife, my children, my friends, and my peer group have all supported, challenged, and walked alongside him to finish the program.

When the journey toward this project began in the spring of 2010, I served as the senior pastor of a White, predominantly middle-class United Methodist church in a small town outside of Dallas, Texas. Demographics showed that in the surrounding area of the church, the fastest growing demographic was young families at or below the poverty level. The church and I believed many of those families would not step foot into the church's sanctuary because of the congregational culture and how far the church building was from the areas of poverty in the community. As a result, the church had initiated the development of a house church in a nearby community that had gained the reputation of being the most violent and drug-ridden neighborhood in the area. The intent was for the house church to serve as a place where interested church members and people from the community could meet and hold church together at a more neutral site. The initial project centered around an eight-week time period, during which the pastor would give eight talks about community, prejudice, grace, and service. The house church members would share eight common meals, during which they would interact and build relationships. They would pray for each other and share Holy Communion. I would do a pretest and posttest to note any change in the attitudes and behaviors of the people of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

As I prepared for my candidacy review to present my project for approval, I found out I was going to be reassigned from First United Methodist Church of Mabank to Prosper United Methodist Church in June of 2011. Prosper United Methodist Church sat in the middle of a quickly growing suburban community over two hours from Mabank. The move was unexpected, and it transpired in the course of about six weeks. In United Methodist denominational rule, once a pastor is appointed to serve a new church, he or

she is not allowed to return or interact with people at the previous church. This is meant to give their previous congregation time to grieve the transition in leadership and to respectfully allow the new pastor the space to develop the key relationships needed for effective leadership. Because of this culture, my original project concept could not be implemented and I would not be able to have quality access to the leaders I had been working with to develop the project. Therefore, the contextual associates and others invested in the project could not work with me anymore on the project. Without the opportunity to complete the project in its original format, I then had to reimagine the project in a context that had not created a missional culture capable of developing a house church in the time frame given for me to complete the project. It also meant that in rethinking the project I would need to find a way for it to compliment my biggest priority in Prosper: attracting and keeping new affluent families moving into the community.

Another challenge in this difficult transition for me had to do with moving from a stable church that I had been pastoring for five years, to a less stable church that needed a lot of energy and push to move out of its comfort zone. First United Methodist Church in Mabank was a church that lent itself to the amount of work required for a Doctor of Ministry project. The new appointment, however, was a different story. Being tasked with doing the hard work of leveraging change in an existing congregation and basically planting the seed and organizing a launch team to start an extension campus, was a large enough task in itself, without having to add the extra layer of completing a Doctor of Ministry project. The leadership of the denominational body that appointed me to the suburban community had communicated that their expectation was for me to accomplish the majority of this work within two to three years from arrival. The move to a

completely different context along with the ministry expectations that accompanied this appointment made it impossible for me to complete a project. I intentionally took a year off from academic work so that I could learn the new context and community and begin to envision a new project. This also would give me time to begin rewriting some foundational work. The time away from the academic program was critical for my ministry because I had very little time to devote to the project.

After a year at the new church, I decided to step away from the original project. Because the church did not have the same missional culture, and the community did not have the same density of poverty. I decided to scale back the project from eight weeks to a one-weekend intense missional pilgrimage or mission oriented. I was even more motivated by the school's stance in light of my taking a year off. United Theological Seminary gave me three choices: implement a project, start the program over, or withdraw. I chose to implement a project. Doing a weekend project also fit the culture of the suburban community due to the busy culture of the families who were involved in the community. I scheduled the weekend in January to decrease the likelihood that there would be scheduling conflicts with sports or other Saturday activities. Because some of the families and individuals could not attend the first scheduled Family Missional Pilgrimage, I planned to schedule a second mission pilgrimage but was going to have to wait until May or June so that the families with active kids would have the least chance of experiencing scheduling conflicts. There were two missional pilgrimages that were to be scheduled. One was going to take place in January before the city sports leagues started their seasons, and the other pilgrimage was going to take place after the sports leagues were done in late May or early June. That plan was undone when I received a

shocking call to move again that spring. Now after only two years at Prosper United Methodist Church and after just finishing one part of his project, I faced the daunting task of moving my family to another church and attempting to finish the project in the midst of yet another move. Having two different moves to two different churches during the project also meant that I created and implemented the second project before much of the foundational work had been re-written. It also meant that I lost touch with my original context associates I had been working with from First United Methodist Church in Mabank. The inconsistent nature of the project's development complicated the relationships with the professional associates who were asked and had agreed to help with the project.

Because of the dynamics of how the project unfolded, the first theoretical chapter did not speak to the importance of naming how resisting the assumed right of the affluent and privileged in Western society to name others or speak as if their views and opinions are normative or universal. In reading about Helena and how the liturgies and worship developed around pilgrimage, I see now that creating or using liturgies that set the stage for how the pilgrimage can be a movement of resistance against the stereotypes and assumed power of affluent pilgrims and also an encouraging and empower setting for those that are traditionally marginalized or undervalued. One of the ways to accomplish this could be in a simple sending off and blessing of the pilgrims being sent and the residents that are preparing to receive them. I have had a congregational laying on of hands when there have been international mission trips, but I would have included that in the preparation for this pilgrimage. Also, there would have had something that would be blessed as a part of the journey—perhaps a journal or something that they would carry

and use on the trip. Having something tangible that pilgrims could hold, or use, during certain situations in order to help ground them in the purpose for the pilgrimage, or to remind them to practice humility and listening when others are speaking.

Project Implementation

This project began with the hypothesis that sending suburban Christians on a Family Missional Pilgrimage for two days and two nights in an urban community could provide enough meaningful social interaction with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds to give affluent Christians the opportunity to understand the power they have in society to name and label others in hopes that they will be more inclined to relinquish that power, or refrain from using it in their relationships with those who have less socio-economic standing. This project also offers those who have been named and labeled by those with more societal power, the opportunity to claim their own God-given capacity to name and thereby validate their own lives. I organized a weekend missional experience in the urban community of Oak Cliff and set the stage for the suburban pilgrims to work alongside church and community members from Oak Cliff as well as worship with them on Sunday morning. It was a family weekend in which children and teenagers could participate. In preparation for the weekend, the pilgrims were to read two chapters from Trevor Hudson's book, *A Mile in My Shoes*, and were asked to write journal entries before, during, and after the weekend.[1] Interviews were scheduled with the families after the weekend, and surveys were used to collect data as well.

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[1] Trevor Hudson, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2005).

When the pilgrims did not return their journal entries in a timely manner and I was in danger of not getting enough data, the decision was made to move to open interviews before and after the weekend. In order to triangulate the new data, I met with and interviewed the associate pastor of the church in Oak Cliff to gain his perspective and sent out follow-up surveys to the pilgrims.

In the pre-interviews and post-interviews with the pilgrims, the interview with the associate pastor, and the follow-up surveys, I was looking for any negative words or attitudes that the individuals expressed that could indicate any existing stereotypical beliefs or prejudice. Then, I would see if there were any changes in the words, phrases, or answers that the responds gave that would suggest a positive change in attitudes regarding people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Also, I looked for the pilgrims to express a desire to continue working with the church in Oak Cliff or to return to Prosper and become involved in building relationships with the under-resourced individuals and families in their community.

Even though the quantity of data was small, there were indications of negative attitudes and prejudice present in the data. Because certain respondents completed journal entries or pre-interviews and did not go on the Family Missional Pilgrimage, I was not able to collect a sufficient amount of post-weekend data to show a significant change in attitude. Two out of the eighteen pilgrims who made negative comments before the pilgrimage made positive comments in the post-interviews.

The interview with the associate pastor from the church in Oak Cliff also showed positive reactions from the suburban pilgrims in their interactions with the church members and community members of Oak Cliff. He did confess that more time could

have allowed for deeper relationships to develop. While the pilgrims could have used more time to build relationships with people from the church and community, they did receive more exposure to the associate pastor. That time allowed them to develop trust and a positive connection. That is the reason that they contacted him one evening to invite him and his family to dinner at their home. They called him to come back and do more work at the church, and they asked his advice on how to deal with personnel situations at work that had to do with an employee from a different socioeconomic background.

The follow-up surveys also indicated negative attitudes and suggested that the Family Missional Pilgrimage might have served as a means of grace, the results of which were reflected in the feedback from the associate pastor and the continuing relationships that are shaping how people from different socioeconomic backgrounds learn from each other. It also communicated the motivation that the pilgrims had for staying involved with the church in Oak Cliff and building deeper relationships with the under-resourced in the Prosper community. Again, these results were statistically insignificant and without more data and more pilgrims involved in the process, I could not report anything that would constitute a definitive change in attitude.

Project Dynamics

To evaluate how this project unfolded must be done in the context of the ultimate goal of the project. What started off as a project about intentional community and shaping attitudes evolved into a project centered around the assumed power that socially privileged affluent Christians exert when they use their assumed power to name others

and speak universally to others from a less privileged social location. The journey from one project brought into focus a narrative about what it means to be a missional pastor in the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church.

Less Researcher Involvement

As I learned more about how pilgrimage developed through Middle Ages with Helena, Egeria, and other early pilgrims, I discovered how liturgies and worship were intertwined with pilgrimage. Even as I look back as an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, my ordination service was a pilgrimage liturgy of sorts. I did not see it as that at the time, but looking back from this moment in my life and ministry, I do. With this in mind, one of the first things I would have offered for the Family Missional Pilgrimage would be a sending off and blessing of the team. I had a congregational laying on of hands when there have been international mission trips, and I would have included that in the preparation for this pilgrimage. This would have related more closely to what would have historically occurred.

As I reflect on the project, I would have incorporated others into the implementation and gathering of results from the project. Livermore and Pui-lan emphasized how important it is to have different voices at the table when planning mission trips and any activity for that matter that will impact the lives of people that have been historically oppressed and not included in conversations. This keeps those that have been traditionally marginalized from being mere objects in someone else's narrative, but allow them to be co-subjects in the story. The potential bias built into the project by having the pastor of the church and the pilgrim's involved increases the likelihood that

they would give more biased answers. Also, having me lead the orientation meetings, make announcements, lead the pilgrimage, and personally interview the families and individuals increases the likelihood that the respondents would give answers that they believed I would want to hear.

In conversation with my peer group, I mentioned that the only verbal recognition of any fear or negativity came from one youth and one child who participated in the pilgrimage. My faculty advisor mentioned that the young people probably spoke because they were unaware or less unaffected by the power dynamics that existed in the interview between the pastor and their parents.

Cultural Awareness

In retrospect, I would have been more intentional in the preparation for the Family Missional Pilgrimage in terms of cultural awareness. If the goal of the Family Missional Pilgrimage was to change attitudes and behaviors, then I could have added an orientation component for cultural sensitivity. This component would have included making pilgrims aware of the racial and socioeconomic imbalances in power that, because of their place in society they may have been unaware. I would have invited an outside facilitator for that discussion.

Part of the role of the pastor in encouraging cultural awareness would be to name the power dynamics that middle-class Christians take for granted in their attitudes and behaviors toward people from different backgrounds. I am aware that there was a danger inherent in the way that the project was structured, as the Oak Cliff United Methodist church members and the other Oak Cliff community members who participated could

have served as object lessons for the affluent Christian pilgrims' spiritual growth. In future projects, I will consider everyone involved in the process a pilgrim, and they will all be included in the planning, implementation, and result gathering of the project.

This integration would have been important for me as well. While I have been involved in many multicultural contexts, I still bring my socio-economic upbringing that impacted my expectations and hopes for how the project would unfold and how it actually went. I had expectations that there would be more people from the community present at the meals and working alongside people at the church. I also was frustrated by the lack of people showing up to work alongside the pilgrims that had come down from the suburban church. This is important because it would have helped if I could have done some more reflective work to be aware of my prejudices and biases that I brought into the context that could reinforce or legitimize any unjust power dynamics in the project.

It would have improved the project if the pilgrims had received the demographic information about the Oak Cliff area so that they could have been more equipped to serve with the members of this community. This may have also elicited stronger reactions, attitudes, and prejudices in the orientations if they would have more clearly indicated the reality of the area that the pilgrims would be traveling to.

One of the ways that a future project could work against the objectifying tendencies involved in a project like this is to frame the pilgrimage as a partnership in which two churches are working together to bring together their gifts and resources to achieve a common goal. In terms of the Doctor of Ministry project, both groups could have been interviewed before about their expectations for the mission work and to determine what it would have been like to work alongside other pilgrims. Following the

pilgrimage, they could have taken a post-test comparing their expectations before the project and their actual experiences.

Greater Emphasis on Critiquing Worship

In the foundational work I did to develop this project, I delved into the Old Testament, the New Testament, studies of historical pilgrimages, and the transformational concept of the means of grace. In my work, one can see in Jacob's struggle with God, that God has the power to see us for who we are and who we have become. In Mark, we see Jesus confronted by a woman desperate for her daughter's healing. She would not allow the negative reaction of Jesus to deter her and so she reframed the slur he made against her. In response, Jesus relented and healed her daughter. In the Christian faith, worship is a central place where Christians come to learn how to name and understand the world in which they live and the people with whom they share life. In part, Helena understood her travels to Palestine as a form of worship. She helped build churches that would become places pilgrims would travel to for hundreds of years to draw closer in their lives to God. In Chapter Three, Pui Kwok-lan and Traci West challenges the power dynamics and systems of white supremacy and empire that are often perpetuated if worship services and rituals go unchecked and are not critically considered.

In the future, I will spend more time unpacking the meanings and assumed understandings that play a part in how suburban Christians understand worship and how an act of worship, such as the Communion that the pilgrims shared in Oak Cliff, as well

as the worship service could shed light on how underlying attitudes and prejudices present in liturgy infiltrate our theology and perpetuate oppressive practices of naming.

Increased Length of Pilgrimage

When forming this pilgrimage, there was concern that the time frame was too small to produce measurable change in the pilgrim's attitudes. The feedback that I received from the associate pastor confirmed the sentiment that having more time, either in longer encounters or repeated encounters, could have had a greater impact on the pilgrims and on the church members and community members of Oak Cliff. During these longer periods of time, or multiple weekends, there could be more activities and time for intentional relationship building.

Also, in light of how making pilgrimages historically allowed for there to be interaction between pilgrims and that the pilgrims repeatedly reported how much they enjoyed interacting with one another while they were on the mission weekend, this would be an important for the next pilgrimage. Pilgrims even acknowledged that in the busyness of life back in the suburbs, it seemed as though it would have not been possible to do so. If I could change how the pilgrims traveled to the Oak Cliff, I would have had the pilgrims travel together in a bus or van instead of drive separately. The next time I organize a pilgrimage and invite both the residents of an under-resourced community and the pilgrims to do it together, I will work to create the means for them to travel together to their service destination.

Theological Conclusions

In Genesis, God renames Jacob and in that renaming, God establishes a new way that Israel will relate to others and the way God will live in relationship with Israel. In Mark, Jesus does not unilaterally use his power, but in light of the persistence and wit of the Syrophoenician woman, he chooses not to wield his power. In this pilgrimage, the purpose was to create a space that human intentionality and the Holy Spirit could work together to transform the minds of affluent Christians and of residents in Oak Cliff. I did see some hints of how this pilgrimage could be a means of grace, but it would need to be tested in more churches and in more communities than just Prosper. What I like to think were glimpses of grace were the talks pilgrims had with the residents of Oak Cliff during meals at the church. Also, seeing kids from Prosper and Oak Cliff working and playing together was a glimpse of the mutuality, trust, and sharing that could happen for people of all ages. Hearing from one of the children in the post-interview that Oak Cliff was not the kind of scary place that they had imagined it to be before they went on the pilgrimage. These are just a few of the glimpses of grace that I saw on the pilgrimage.

There would also need to be more involvement with residents of communities like Oak Cliff. If this were going to be an opportunity for mutual transformation through the building of reciprocal relationships, then more involvement in the process of creating and executing the project would have been required. It was good to hear in the reflections of the associate pastor, he noted how the members of his church felt empowered because of the positive interactions they had with the suburban pilgrims.

The good news is that some of the pilgrims felt a positive impetus to become more involved with the church in Oak Cliff or to get involved in their local community. But the work that God requires and that Rieger and West call for must go beyond doing projects with the under-resourced and marginalized but standing in solidarity with them in political and economic terms. For people with economic, political, and religious power, God gives us an example of how we can stay our need to name and allow others to use their own given power to name themselves and their reality. This can move beyond community ministries, but also for legislation and policy to be implemented to reflect God's priority for the widow and the orphan. This is one of the ways that God will bring about transformation on a societal scale.

Impact On the Researcher

Two traits that I developed in completing this project were perseverance and gratitude. This project also had an impact on me because it was personal. So much of who God has been shaping me into has developed when I have left my comfort zone and served alongside individuals and families from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Living in a cross-cultural family has meant that I have experienced racism and prejudice through the experiences of my family. As I shared in my spiritual autobiography, both in Prosper and Argyle, my wife and friends of our family experienced the racism. As someone who is privileged by my social location, I have shown my prejudice in my life and relationships. I brought a lot of anticipation to the project—not only because I wanted positive results supporting the hypothesis but also

because I wanted people to experience the life changing love of God that I have experienced undertaking missions for almost twenty years.

Over and over again, I had to step back and allow the pilgrims to have their own experiences and to think through these experiences. There were also expectations and hopes that I brought to the Family Missional Pilgrimage because of what I have experienced in my life and I had to let those expectations go. Even though I had gone through many of these circumstances in my own life, I had to allow people to have their experiences and learn from them. I tried to focus on asking good questions and surrounding people with the resources in the readings as well as providing them with teaching time with Dr. Rieger and time to share with the people of Oak Cliff.

Dr. Elaine Heath

Before I conclude this chapter, I would like to include the insights of Dr. Elaine Heath around the practice and impact of pilgrimage. The project that I intended to implement when I started my Doctor Ministry program and the statistics that did come from the Family Missional Pilgrimage did not pan out. When I started the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary I wanted to deepen my understanding of missional ecclesiology by working with Mike Slaughter and to use this project to systematically work through some of those ideas. I had envisioned working through a project that engage people from different socio-economic backgrounds in intentional community for the sake of rooting out prejudice and bias. When I moved to another church, the project evolved into the Family Missional Weekend and the theological framework transitioned from common meals and Holy Communion to reframing of the

project in terms of my personal and professional pilgrimage. The data generated from the project did not statistically validate the hypothesis. By widening the lens and taking into account my personal pilgrimage as an itinerant ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, I have discovered the space to take a broader look at the events that led me to the completion of the project. I will spend more time looking into my personal journey in chapter seven. In this section, I will examine the feedback I received from Dr. Elaine Heath about her experience of pilgrimage in her work as the McCreless Professor of Evangelism at Southern Methodist University and the Director of the Center for Missional Wisdom. She has led several pilgrimages with faculty, students, and others over the last ten years. Her responses illustrate that, while my Family Missional Pilgrimage did not bear the results that I desired, the practice of pilgrimage could have an impact on people's lives.

Dr. Heath reflected on her experiences, she spoke to the reality of how pilgrimage, literally the travel from one physical place to another, has made a different in her life, her ministry, and in the lives of the people involved with her in her work with intentional missional communities. She talked about how she has experienced a meta-pilgrimage in her life that she believes relates to my struggles as a missional pastor trying to live out my calling in an institution that is not always friendly to that ecclesiastical posture. As she said, "Chris, you are a person of missional ecclesiology that is working in a system that is allergic to missional ecclesiology." If there is anything that my experience has taught me it is that this statement is true. No matter how much my colleagues and those who had authority over me have said, my first fifteen years in ministry have born this truth out: the polity and priorities of the United Methodist Church

can sometimes seem allergic to missional ecclesiology. While there is the potential for the Bishop and the District Superintendents to think about the movement of the Holy Spirit and a pastor's giftedness on a broader scale, their priorities may be more influenced by the need for church growth and the perpetuation of the institution than serving alongside those who do not have the combined resources to support the financial and physical needs of the United Methodist Church. For the sake of this section, I want to lay out some of her observations she made about two pilgrimages in which she participated and how those experiences affirm, broaden, and or challenge the work that I have done.

In 2008, Dr. heath started her first semester at Perkins School of Theology. Within that first semester, she had students streaming into her office confessing that they could not see how they could live out their faith in the United Methodist Church. "Why should I stay?" was their question. As Dr. Heath began praying through this experience, she felt there was convergence around the "emergent" streams of thought and ecclesiology. By emergent streams, I believe that Dr. Heath was talking about ways of doing church and being the church outside of what are more common Protestant formats such as Sunday school, worship services, small groups, or age-based spiritual formation. She is speaking to neo-monastic forms of church such as living in intentional community with others in a certain neighborhood, inviting people to live by a rule of life, or even going on pilgrimages regularly. So she began to read, listen, and pray about where the Holy Spirit would lead her. Out of this time of discernment, she started a small missional community and began a neo-monastic community in which people lived in intentional community with one another. Both groups followed a rule of life and committed to live in mission with their neighbors. These communities were places where people could test

and experiment living in missional community and learn through their successes and failures. One of the challenges that Dr. Heath faced in this process was finding a way to connect what she was cultivating in these missional communities to the institution of the United Methodist Church, a church that was founded with this type of missional DNA. Connecting the two was more difficult than she imagined it would be.

In 2009, she went on pilgrimage with Dr. Michaal Hawn, another professor at Perkins School of Theology, and a handful of seminarians. They traveled to Iona and started a Celtic missional pilgrimage. She began to do some of the preparatory reading for her journey and she began to feel an amazing energy about her readings and about her trip. She realized that God was calling her into this theology and into this way of understanding her life and her work. She shared, "That whole tradition is what I am called into right now as a professor – as an ordained person – as a Christian - this is where my life is."

While they are in the airport waiting to board and she knew just about everyone in the group, except for one person. She notices this man in his late forties with graying hair. She asks him what he is planning to do after seminary. His name was Larry Duggins. Larry started to articulate that he felts called to do something within the emergent movement. Well, again, Dr. Heath felt energy about this connection and calling of someone else to something that she feels very passionate about. They start talking and she explains what she is doing. She also shares that the landlord for one of the houses that is home to an intentional community wants her house back. She is not nervous, but is praying that God will provide another house, just like God provided that one. They get on the flight and forty-eight hours later, they are standing on the beach of Iona and Larry

walks up to her and shows her his phone. He explains that his realtor has identified these five properties, was she interested in any of them.

Dr. Heath said, "It blew my mind." That was the beginning of God calling Larry into working her in the unfolding reality that is know the Center for Missional Wisdom. Throughout that particular pilgrimage God continued to clarify Larry's vocational call. It was also during that spiritual journey that Heath realized that the schema of pilgrimage was what she was going to be using as the foundation for her work with missional communities and intentional communal living. Since that pilgrimage the Center has grown, it now has seven full-time employees as well as Larry Duggins and Dr. Heath. Another example of how that particular pilgrimage impacted someone's life came in the life of a young man who had come out of a life of bartending. He was Dr. Heath described, a "death-metal guy" with tattoos who was searching to find his place in ministry. He thought he was going to have to leave the seminary to find another way to serve God, but now he is in the ordination process and he currently works at a non-profit that helps the homeless. Dr. Heath explained "that it never would have occurred to him to work with the homeless if it had not been for that pilgrimage; it was a starting point."

This was such a powerful experience for Dr. Heath and in what she saw happen in the lives of the pilgrims that participated, she not only made pilgrimage a part of the theological framework for her thinking, but also made it an important practice: "So now in our foundation pilgrimage experiences are a part of the ministry that we offer in order to help the church reclaim the fact that we are a pilgrim people." She went on to explain that from that point on pilgrimage began to be woven into every aspect of her life, her ministry, and the work of the Center for Missional Wisdom. They still go on pilgrimage.

In the summer of 2014, they took a two weeklong pilgrimage. The first half was a hiking pilgrimage that went the way of St. Cuthbert. It was an eighty-mile journey the first week that took them up and down hills and through all sorts of terrain. The group consisted of mostly the staff from the Center of Missional Wisdom as well as a few others. They went on the trip because they were approaching the next stage of incredible growth for their organization and they wanted to go on pilgrimage as a way of centering themselves and listening "to the right voice by gathering around the Spirit together." Through her eyes, the experience was life changing!

In preparation for the pilgrimage, they had the group read some pilgrim theology. One of the lessons that Dr. Heath learned emphasized is that on pilgrimage, it is often the obstacles and unexpected challenges that can bring the most learning. She also encouraged them to pack as lightly as possible. They instructed the pilgrims "to take as little clutter and baggage as possible." They practiced morning and evening prayer each day. Often in the evening they would use a prayer of examen so that they could collectively answer the question: "where did we hear God calling us today? Where did we feel life draining out of us today?" They also took time along their hike to talk about the stories of their pilgrim predecessors like St. Cuthbert, Reverend George MacCleod, and John Bell. They reflected on the stories and asked how those stories were relevant to their story of the Missional Wisdom Foundation. Were there parallels? For example Dr. Heath saw parallels in her work in recasting theological education and the work of Reverence MacCleod.

During their trip to Iona they also visited cathedrals and the ruins of some religious sites. It gave them chances to talk about the role of buildings and programs in

the role of the church. Where and how is the Gospel passed on in all of that? She confessed that in planned and in unplanned ways they kept returning to the question: What does it mean to be the church? It was in the midst of those deep moments that they began to realize that the Missional Foundation's call, like other renewing movements is "to spark the missional imagination of the church and helping it to get unstuck." That continues to draw them to ask about the implications of that calling upon the foundation and also in their personal lives.

Now, I want to revisit one characteristic of this particular pilgrimage and its importance to Heath and her work and that is the idea that obstacles during a pilgrimage can be places of important learning. She illustrated this concept by describing one of the most memorable events on that sojourn: British Airways lost the entire group's checked luggage. At first, she said it was a nightmare. For those that had traveled as pilgrims before know to carry the essentials with you, but the others hadn't learned that valuable lesson. All of a sudden people that had their essential items with them in their carry-ons had to share and sacrifice for the people they did not. "Can I wear your socks?" Dr. Heath smiled as she explained that there was "just a lot of rigmarole" in the group as they struggled with impatience, angry feelings, the need for money, and the consequences of lost luggage. Even though it was a difficult experience for the group, it helped build community by forcing the group to have to negotiate an inconvenient experience together and they could work together to do it. For Heath, it became the most important part of the trip because it set the context for the whole journey. Even now, when they come to a point when they are trying to figure something out, people will refer back to the pilgrimage and to the lost checked luggage. "We often remember moments from the

pilgrimage that give us perspective on what we are doing now or when something will pop up." Returning to some of the other insights for Dr. Heath and the foundation, they realized that since pilgrimage is at the core of their self-understanding, they are intentional about taking a day apart every quarter for spiritual formation. This gives them a chance to place a deeper emphasis on the spiritual formation that is rooted in that shared pilgrimage experience. She also revealed that the strong sense of team and shared responsibility lead her and Larry to expand their leadership model to diminish the sense of exclusive hierarchy. They wanted to model inclusive and theologically diverse leadership to the organization and to the church. Currently, they are growing into this configuration more and learning how to trust it.

As I reflect upon my experience of the Family Missional Pilgrimage and also the meta-narrative of my personal pilgrimage in completing this project. Listening to her describe the two pilgrimages in our conversation did reinforce the fact that there has to be a sufficient length to the journey or repetition of shorter experiences so that the pilgrims will have enough time to prepare for the pilgrimage and practice the disciplines of study, but also have time to reflect and articulate their feelings and the connections they are making in the process. This gives the revelations a chance to germinate and take greater hold in the consciousness of the person. This also gives pilgrims a greater chance to incarnate those changes in thinking in their everyday lives. In terms of Heath's desire for the Missional Foundation to spark the missional imagination of the church, the longer the pilgrimage and the deeper the time of reflection there could be a fuller sense of how the Holy Spirit could fan the flames of the pilgrim's missional and relational imagination. Part of that space can be the freedom for the more affluent pilgrims to resist the

temptation to use their power to name and label their neighbors, while the residents of Oak Cliff claim the space created by this missional imagination to claim and describe their own experience for themselves and for others. In the story of Jacob wrestling with God at Jabbok, the naming did not come quickly but through the process of their struggle. Allowing time to experience a new acquaintance, or navigate a new relationship, gives a pilgrim the chance to experience transformation and for "new names" to emerge in these new contexts.

In light of her comments about how the unexpected challenges and obstacles give one a great chance to learn, I think that having more time on the pilgrimage gives participants a chance to encounter the unexpected. For me, the two unexpected reappointments during the course of Doctor of Ministry program served as two such obstacles. In terms of the Family Missional Pilgrimage, there were some unexpected things that happened. For example, one organization not being available for us to help and rainy weather also kept us from doing more work with residents of Oak Cliff outside. Also, because of how the Family Missional Pilgrimage was managed (mostly by me), the group was insulated from them and did not have a chance to learn from them. If pilgrims from both communities had worked together to create the missional experience, there could have been a better chance to learn. As I talked about in the results of the Family Missional Pilgrimage, there were glimmers of what Heath described in our conversation. One of the things that I witnessed in conversations I had with some of the pilgrims was their desire to integrate some of what they learned in Oak Cliff to what we were doing in Prosper. Now, my reappointment did not allow for me to continue to have pilgrimages

and build deeper relationships with Oak Cliff United Methodist, but it strengthen the ideas and principles of mission and service that I had been teaching the church.

Now, turning to my personal narrative, I felt great resonance with the personal and professional experiences of Dr. Heath. While the institutional structures of the United Methodist Church espouse the importance of mission and its vital role in being Christian and being the Church, there are times these structures can also seem to "allergic" to missional ecclesiology. They can be actively allergic by doing things that blatantly undermine the creative ways in which the Holy Spirit fans the flames of the missional imagination of individuals and churches. They also can show a passive ambivalence to the role and importance of mission by reappointing missional pastors that are in the midst of creating vital ministry across different socio-economic backgrounds. This passive missional subversion is employed when the priorities of mission in diverse mission fields comes into conflict with the United Methodist Church's need to sustain itself by growing suburban congregations because of the financial and human capital they infuse into the system. I will address this theme as well as others in a recounting of my personal journey.

Yet, even in the midst of what, for me, can seem like only negative there are some positive things to learn. One of the things that I will share here is importance of sowing seeds. By moving in the itinerant system, I have had the chance to sow the seeds of mission and cultivate its growth and development in the DNA of the churches and their communities. I believe that God has also helped me to see that I cannot hold onto my kingdoms, but ultimately serve God. While there are times when it seems like the moves and other obstacles are thwarting God's purposes, or mine, God may have used these challenges to develop my faith, trust, and maybe to reposition me for what God has in

store. Maybe what these struggles have been is a way to help me see that my primary mission field is my family.

In closing, having a conversation with Dr. Heath affirmed some of the things I glimpsed in my work to develop, to implement, and to reflect upon the Family Missional Pilgrimage. While there was preparation and reading, disciplines practiced, stories explored, work done, and some small signs of impact, the next pilgrimage will need to include more people and incorporate a longer pilgrimage than a weekend. There will also more intentional effort on processing the experience and incorporating the learning and reflection into the life of the church. I have also felt confirmation for my personal journey through the point that Dr. Heath makes about the growth that comes from the unexpected circumstances and obstacles we face. Even though I could not see it a year ago when I sat for my first defense, I had faced serious setbacks in my personal calling to be missional in my work. While I have done some serious reflection upon the growth and wisdom that has come from this long journey, I do believe that it has brought my family and I closer. It has helped me learn more about myself and my family's calling to be in ministry with me. I will continue to draw from this experience in my future ministry and in the unfolding of my family in that ministry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there were many things that I could have done differently and things that I will do differently as I continue to offer people the opportunity to serve and cross ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries in the future, the Family Missional Pilgrimage was not a success. Due to its limited nature, it did not have a broad enough

sample involved for there to be statistical viability. While there were aspects of the Family Missional Pilgrimage that hinted at the possibility of affluent Christians identifying their negative attitudes and prejudice toward people of different socio-economic backgrounds and choosing to use, or not use, their ability to name and label the lives of others. Because the project did not unfold as I had planned, I included two other sources of information. First, I included my personal experience and the experiences of my family. Second, I sought out the perspective of organizing and leading pilgrimages by Dr. Elaine Heath, professor of evangelism at Perkins School of Theology. I also share in the last chapter of the project, how the journey to complete this project has been a personal pilgrimage for me as I have tried to live out my calling to ministry through the itinerant ministry of the United Methodist Church.

Initially, this project was about the Family Missional Pilgrimage; however, another pilgrimage developed in the narrative of this Doctor of Ministry Project. That pilgrimage is the journey I unknowingly started when I entered the Doctor of Ministry Program. In the next chapter, I will discuss in more detail how I experienced God's transforming grace in the midst of a five year long pilgrimage of what seemed like continual helplessness and powerlessness.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A PASTOR'S PILGRIMAGE

As someone who grew up benefitting from the privilege of my social location, there were things in my life that made me feel uncomfortable with the ways I saw that privileged lifestyle lived out by my family, friends, church, and community. While I did not act upon that discontent, I have found that the passion of my ministry is to work with traditionally marginalized communities hoping to bring what personal, relational, or material resources I have to bear in hopes of creating space for kids, teens, families, senior adults to resist the systems of oppression in a struggle to be all that God has created them to be. At one time, that calling took place in the inner city of Dallas, but now I seek to live out my calling in the suburbs of the Dallas Fort Worth area. Now, my passion to reach, love, and lift up the underserved and underrepresented is expressed in leading churches like Argyle United Methodist Church, an affluent community of faith, out of its context and into ministry with the people and families in its community that come from different socio-economic backgrounds. The desire for my Doctor of Ministry was to be a vehicle through which I could process and synthesize my passion to support, build, and sustain missional communities wherever I go to serve.

Over the last six months as I have reflected on the journey of my doctoral studies, I confess there are still some insights that are hard to see. However, there are some rays of sunshine that are breaking through the clouds of this tough journey. Here are some of

the gleanings that I am beginning to celebrate. First, Gracie, my two sons, and I have been honing the narrative of what it means to be an itinerant missional family and trying to understand our calling in the midst of the United Methodist system. Through this pilgrimage my wife and I have been able to articulate our calling as a missional family. In other words, the conversations we had over the last five years have been helpful in us understanding the gifts of diversity and experience to churches that do not readily present ethnic diversity and experience in a multitude of contexts. Because of my own privilege that comes from benefitting from the fruits of colonialism and oppressive systems, my relationship with my wife helps hold me accountable for how I live my life and lead churches I serve in primarily affluent Euro-American Christians.

My spiritual journey has gone through incredible peaks and valleys and over the last five years as I have sought to complete my Doctor of Ministry. I had specific expectations when I enrolled. I was excited about the church that I was serving in Mabank, TX. We were preparing to break through the emphasis on meeting physical needs and began to focus on building stronger relational ministries across socio-economic and ethnic barriers. Because of the work I had done in preparation to start a micro-community at Munger Place United Methodist Church, I was thrilled to embark upon a similar journey in Mabank and to make that the basis for the doctoral work. My kids were young and the thought of finishing my studies in the two and half years proposed for the project was attractive. It meant I would be done before they were older and more involved in sports and other extra-curricular activities. Also, our family was in a good financial place and we could fund this educational endeavor. Finally, I was going to have a chance to work with Mike Slaughter, a leader that I had learned much from and coveted

the chance to learn in more intimate and intensive format. Now, fast-forward four years to my defense. I was exhausted, burned out, emotional and desperate to finish my project. I made a brief presentation about my project and, beginning with Mike Slaughter, the team questioned the quality of my work, its conclusions, my thought process, and why I even scheduled a defense with the quality of work I had done. Mike Slaughter suggested that I take another year and redo the project, expanding its reach to other churches and come back in a year. I could not do it. By this time, meaning four years after I started the program, my children were older and I was missing a lot of their childhood not to mention time with my wife. My family had invested a lot of financial resources for tuition and the cost of travel to and from Texas to Ohio. My wife and I had agreed that regardless of the outcome of the defense, because of the pressure the prolonged project was taking, I could not continue. We were emotionally, relationally, and financially spent.

What happened in between such the anticipation and excitement of the spring of 2010 and the pain, frustration, and disappointment of 2014? A lot! One theme to use is powerlessness. I understand that as a White, middle-class, well-educated male, I have experienced very little, if any, powerlessness in my life. Maybe that is why when I knowingly entered into the itinerant ministry, I have struggled to cope with even the minor experience of powerlessness during the multiple moves and changes that have taken place during my doctoral studies. The powerlessness I experienced resulted from the nature of the polity the United Methodist Church. In the United Methodist Church, when one is an ordained elder in full-connection, there is an expectation that one will itinerate. To itinerate is to be willing to change mission fields at the discretion of the

Resident Bishop of that Annual Conference. Sometimes, when an elder is re-appointed to another mission field they are consulted about how this will impact certain initiatives in the church or personal circumstances for the elder and his or her family. Consultations are possible, but not required.

Entering the fifth year of serving in Mabank, I began to hear rumors that I was going to be reappointed to another church. This was alarming because I had only completed the first year of my D. Min. project and I was preparing to present my project for approval by candidacy review. Being approved by candidacy review means that I could proceed with the project I had chosen to do. Because the project is contextual by nature, being moved would have fundamentally change what I could do for my project and could have impacted all of the foundational work that I had done. This would have meant I would have to do three fourths of my written work over again.

The only real recourse I had upon hearing the rumors was to contact my District Superintendent and any other influential figure that advises the Bishop and let them know my situation. I met with my District Superintendent and explained to him my predicament. I informed him that I needed at least one more year to finish my project and that moving me at this time would put my family and my studies in an incredible bind. He understood and explained that he did not know of any move that impacted me. I met with another District Superintendent and we had the same conversation. I informed him that I had started D. Min. project and that it was contextual and I needed just one more year to complete my work. Again, I got an affirmation that there was really nothing in process for me moving and that he understood the situation I was in.

Even though I had these conversations, needless to say that Gracie and I were very anxious as appointments were being made. Finally, the week after Mother's Day, Gracie and I felt like we would be in Mabank for another year. Almost all of the appointments had been made and it was unlikely that we would receive a call six weeks from the day we would have officially moved. We were wrong. The following week my District Superintendent called and informed me that our family would be moving in less than six weeks to Prosper, TX. We were stunned. How would we go through the whole process of informing the church, meeting the new church, and packing up all of our things and moving to a new place in less than six weeks? What would I do now with all of the work invested into the current D. Min. project?

I felt powerless and frustrated. Gracie did not know what to feel. In the United Methodist Church, this was the reality of itinerancy. I did everything I could from my position. The District Superintendents told me this would be a great opportunity for my family and me. I was told that I would have the chance to take a small struggling church and grow it into a big suburban congregation. I was not excited about the move to Prosper because I did not feel the new mission field was within my personal calling. What I wanted to do was to make disciples to transform the world and the primary way that I felt called to do that was through forging relationships across socio-economic and ethnic boundaries. I did not experience excitement about growing a homogenous suburban congregation. While my ego enjoyed some of this affirmation, I felt misunderstood. They assumed I would relish the opportunity to move to the suburbs and use my gifts to grow large congregations. Looking back, I do not think I would have had such a negative reaction if someone would have sat down with me and acknowledged that

this move was not part of my personal calling, but that the annual conference needed me to serve a greater vision. I also realize that callings are not static and never changing. Just as Jacob had experienced change in his life and Jesus reconsidered his use of power and ministered to the Syrophoenician woman, these changes could be new ways that God was stretching and preparing me to live out my calling differently.

I emailed United Theological Seminary and let them know that I was going to have to take a year off. I had to settle my family in to a new home and context. I also had to learn about this new context so that I could develop a new project. I had hoped I could do some rewriting of my foundational paperwork during the year away so that when I officially started the program again, I would not have to start from scratch. In thinking all of this I had no clue what the next year was going to hold. My wife left her job in Mabank in our move to Prosper. We lost part of our income and the impact of the move was hard on her and my two sons. This was the first move they had ever experienced and they, along with Gracie and I, were grieving. My wife took a year off of work to try and be a constant presence for the boys. I was rarely home. The annual conference was clear that their priority for me was laying the groundwork for Prosper UMC to start a satellite campus in hopes of sparking growth in that fast growing suburb. No one talked to me about my calling. They did not take the time to have a conversation with me about what I valued in ministry. My fear was that I would be spending so much of my time working outside of my calling that I would burn out.

My family and I were grieving from our move to Prosper from Mabank. We were in crisis mode because the move happened in such a short period of time and our financial stability had been shaken. We were moved to a context that was foreign to us. It

was also incredibly difficult for me because this was a church that was not at the same level of missional understanding and engagement in the community. As a pastor, who feels called to lead churches into missional engagement, it meant that in some ways I was having to start from square one in my missional teaching and leading. This along with the fact that the focus of my ministry would not be missional but attractional was totally new for me. I had gone from seeking to connect middle class congregations with the socio-economic diversity in their communities, to focusing my time and energy on attracting affluent families to our church in hopes of starting a satellite campus.

This was more difficult than I had imagined. I felt like I was being effective in some ways, but also felt like I was disconnected from an important part of my spirituality. I felt like I was burning out because my ministry was only tangentially connected to my personal calling and the passion that gave me energy. This also took its toll on my family because I was not able to be the father and husband I felt they needed me to be in this incredible time of transition for them. Also, our worries about money continued to grow. The fees we were paying to stay enrolled in the D. Min. program, along with some other unexpected bills, were impacting us financially. In our interview, Dr. Heath talked about seeing obstacles during pilgrimage as pivot points in which God positions us for new things and new experiences. I confess that during all of the transitions we were going through, I was not embracing them as pivot points that God might be using, but walls that were keeping me and my family from being and doing what I wanted us to be and do. Part of going on a pilgrimage is about letting go and leaving what you know, or what you control and journeying to new places and encountering unexpected people, places, and things, and trust that God is forming and

shaping you along the path. This is something that not only applies to how I envisioned my ministry, but my family and even who I thought I would be. In the early spring of 2012, I called United Theological Seminary to ask about the fees we had to pay. In that call, I learned that if I did not re-engage the next semester I would have to start all over again. The feelings of panic and powerlessness began to swell. I felt overwhelmed and my options seemed few. I could not do a project like the initial project I envisioned because the church and the community were so different. Because I took the year off, I had little support from my peer group, or from any of the associates I had developed at Mabank. My family and I had already invested more than $20,000 in tuition, fees, and travel. We could not justify starting over and spending twice the money. I called my peer mentor and explained the situation. He felt like we could pull this off, but I would need to bring a workable project to be approved by candidacy review in August of 2012. Then, I would have to coordinate and implement the project in the fall of 2012 and be ready to defend my project in the fall of 2014. To say that this was an ambitious goal is an understatement, but I agreed. I discussed the decision with my wife and we agreed that I would do what I would have to do in terms of time away from our family for research, writing, and execution of the project to finish. We also agreed to do whatever it took to make this year financially possible.

In August of 2012, I flew to Ohio with the only project that I felt like I could accomplish that would satisfy the requirements for being in the missional church focus group. My faculty consultant, peer group mentor, and I worked through the review and also the contingencies for what would need to happen for the project to be possible. It is important to note at this moment that there was another transition taking place during this

time: a new faculty mentor was going to be assigned to our group. Because of her pregnancy and soon-to-be-born child, she was not able to attend and read any of my paperwork or information about my project. I spent September, October, and November putting together the Family Missional Pilgrimage for January of 2013 and another pilgrimage later in March. All the while, I was trying to find time to rewrite my chapters on Contextual Analysis, Theoretical Foundations, and Methodology. I was spending long hours away from my family trying to complete my studies and I was feeling the weight of working full time to start a satellite campus.

For me personally, it meant that I had not had the chance to grieve leaving Mabank. I worked under incredible pressure to meet the goals and objectives of my appointment and of my D. Min. project. I stressed about and felt responsible for the financial reality our family experience and began to feel guilty for it. I grieved the time I was spending away from kids now that they were getting older and asking for me more. I also struggled because my missional calling had to take a backseat to the needs of the itinerant system. In the morass of all of these emotions, I just kept trying to put one foot in front of the other because I believed that the end was near for my studies and that would lift a lot of the burden that my wife and I had been feeling.

For the first time, our family lived in a culture of wealth and excess like we had never experienced. We struggled to discern our family identity in relation to this affluent suburban context. My wife and I started having conversations about how we understood our ministry as a family and what it meant to us to be an itinerant family. In our eyes, we were missionaries. These communities we were called to serve were not communities like the ones we grew up in, but we believed that not only could we learn from them, but

that through our diversity and love for mission, we could share something with them. Beginning to talk about ourselves as missionaries helped us to talk about God's calling for our family. It helped us explain why we cannot stay in one place like others and why we will not always feel like we belong in every place we go to serve. It has helped us speak to how we understand the purpose and impact of our family. It is also helping me be able to talk to my family and to others about imagining what God is doing and how God is shaping and forming my family and me in this. I have probably been more like Jacob than I would like to admit. In hopes of reconciling the grief, anger, and frustration, I have experienced under the leadership of the North Texas Annual Conference, I am finding myself wrestling with God. What are the blessings that I have struggled for and felt entitled to? What kind of churches should I be have been able to lead? What kinds of places did I expect my wife, my kids, and me to be formed by? Did I want my family to live in a middle-class community or in an urban area? Where is the diversity I wanted to be a part of? Even now, in the midst of this soul-wrenching confrontation, I am coming to grips with the consequences and cost of following Jesus. While Genesis gives the impression that God's mark on Jacob comes quickly, I feel like I am being made slowly into a more humble person. The pride, ego, and sense of control, that I was probably harboring, I feel is being slowly pulled away and my heart being shaped by God's hand so that not only can I find reconciliation with the North Texas Annual Conference, but with my own heart and with God. While the morning has not yet come, I do feel there are rays of sunlight beginning to break over the horizon and I am beginning to look forward to the peace and reconciliation, the blessing, that God has in store.

I completed the first Family Missional Pilgrimage in January 2013 and hoped to complete the second pilgrimage the following March to help me meet at least some baseline numbers to give my results some more credibility. Unfortunately, I did not finish writing my paperwork, complete another pilgrimage, or defend my project, because my District Superintendent informed me that I would be moving to Argyle United Methodist Church. Only sixteen months after moving to Prosper, we were going to have to move to Argyle, Texas. We were numb. Now, we would have to pack up our family and, not just move, but buy our first home. I was beside myself with anger and frustration. Like before, there was not any consultation on the state of my family, the state of my studies, the time I had invested in Prosper, or interest shown in my calling or perspective. Over the last sixteen months while I had been working long hours and trying to find a way to make progress on my D. Min., my wife had basically been running the house and being a single parent to our kids. If there was anyone that felt more powerless in our family it was her. She had little to no say, but had to deal with all of the consequences. When it came time to move, she was exhausted. In the course of eight weeks, I alone packed up our house, bought a new house, and moved us to Argyle.

For the first few months, my main priority was settling my family in and getting rooted in our new mission field. The numbness continued but with a new wrinkle. My family and I were experiencing compounded grief. Because we had only been in Prosper for two years, we were still grieving Mabank, and now we were grieving our move from Prosper as well. I remember my oldest son, Zan, remarking that now he missed two schools. The school he attended in Mabank and the school he went to Prosper. In the fall of 2014, as I was driving Zan to soccer practice, I asked him how things were going at

school and if he had made any friends. He said yes, but that he had told them that he would only be in Argyle for two years. It broke my heart. We were a missional family and we held onto the belief that God was as work in the midst of this transition. Somehow and in someway we believed God needed us in Argyle.

The level of urgency was lower at Argyle than it was a Prosper. I was not expected to start a church, my charge was to keep the church stable after a critical pastor change and keep it on its growth path. Argyle was a larger church that had great momentum and the most important thing for the church was to get me acclimated and finish the building of its new children and youth wing. I was able to begin to work on my doctoral studies again. Just like I could not return to Mabank after I moved to keep up with the people I worked with there, I could not return to Prosper to do the second pilgrimage or have access to the context or professional associates that had been cultivating. My emphasis was to finish re-writing my paperwork in light of the one Family Missional Pilgrimage. Again, another year of spending extended time away from my family. After two moves, three churches, two faculty consultants and a whole new set of peers in my peer group, I was as close to being emotionally and mentally obliterated with every aspect of my project. My peer group mentor kept encouraging me and I kept writing. I sent off paperwork to my peer group mentor, a newly designated professional associate, and my faculty consultant. After receiving advanced copies of my work, no one contacted me or replied with any concern or red flags about the project. I scheduled the defense and made my travel plans. My defense had to be one of the most emotional, humiliating, humbling, and painful experiences I have ever had to face professionally or personally. I held back tears for most of the meeting because of all of the emotions that I

felt because of the profound sense of helplessness I had experienced for almost three years as the Bishop and District Superintendents of the North Texas Annual Conference made decisions about my life and the life of my family without any consultation. The frustration and misplaced anger that I held back in the meeting because of all of the consequences of those decisions that were cascading down upon my life – my D. Min., my kids, my wife, my health, and other relationships. Regardless of what I should have done, or should not have done, I felt like I had given my best to navigate my ministry, the D. Min. process and really did not feel like I had anymore to give.

After the team had finished interviewing me, they asked me to go outside and wait. I waited for an hour and a half outside in the hallways of United Theological Seminary. It was a long time to be with my thoughts and some raw emotions. It may have been the first time I had let myself begin to be aware of the emotions I had been holding back over the last three years. As time trickled by, I realized I was not going to pass. I realized that for reasons within and outside of my control, I had not met some of the expectations of my peer group and of the program. Regardless of the outcome, I felt like I had made the best decisions I could have given the instruction and information that I had. Once an hour had passed another thought entered my mind: They may have been trying to find a way to pass me. I admit there was a part of me that liked that thought, but I knew that I could not accept a passing grade. I knew how they felt about work and I could not accept a passing grade knowing just how far off the mark I was. I knew I had not turned in quality work and I could not live with myself, or honor the sacrifice of my family, if I accepted a degree I did not earn.

After what seemed like an eternity, Mike Slaughter walked out of the room to come and get me. I could tell by the look on his face that I did not pass. When we were seated, he shared the decision. It was hard to hear out loud, but it was what I expected. Actually, it was liberating to hear someone name what I knew was reality. What I did not expect was a chance to finish. After having so many people make choices that affected me, the team empowered me by offering me the decision to continue and finish my project. I felt empowered because they showed understanding about how the journey had impacted my family and they gave my wife and I the choice to continue or to stop. What I have experienced in this project has to be put in context because having the education and resources to even do a doctoral project is a reflection of my privilege. But, the small taste of powerlessness that I have felt in this process helped me focus on how important empowerment is. Creating space at the decision table is important. Listening to the voices of those being impacted by the decisions being made is critical and allow them to have input into the outcome is essential. Finally, the team helped me see that the project that started out being about intentional community was really about the pilgrimage of missional pastor and his family trying to navigate the dynamics itinerancy in the United Methodist Church and being faithful to their missional calling. Looking back, I had allowed myself to get lost in the urgency and chaos of my appointments and the work to complete my D. Min. As one of the faculty consultants began to list some of the themes that jumped out at her, it felt like she was talking about someone else; I was so distant from my personal experience.

For all of the feelings of powerlessness and frustration, a feeling of empowerment came from a group of people that surprised me: my defense team. After informing me that they could not pass me and that there would need to be serious editing to my project in order for me to graduate, they empowered me to make a choice. They wanted me to finish. They believed that I could do the work and wanted to give me that chance. Even though I had explained my family's decision not to proceed regardless of the outcome, they wanted me to finish and to talk to my wife about doing it. While I had the choice in how I responded to my sense of helplessness in the middle of the two moves during my project, I did not feel like I had been given choices in the process. They advised me to take the following summer off and to be with my family. They realized that I was an emotional and spiritual train wreck and that I needed to decompress and spend time with my family. In terms of my project, they helped me see that I was in crisis mode and had not been able to do the reflection and synthesis that I needed for the project. They also empowered me to see the meta-narrative of my personal pilgrimage as a missional pastor as an overarching theme for my life and for my project. They gave me the chance to reflect upon my pilgrimage and integrate that journey into the work of my project. Reflection is an important part of pilgrimage. It is something that I attempted to build into the Family Missional Pilgrimage and it is something that Dr. Heath built into the pilgrimages she organized for students and for her coworkers. Looking back into the last five years, I realize now just how isolated and disconnected I was from my peer group, from my family, and from others that could have helped me reflect upon what I was going through.

Our experience also helped me to celebrate that the first and most important mission field I have to serve is my family. How we live out our faith together is an important part of who we are. This project has helped us process how we have experienced racism and prejudice through the experiences of my wife and kids and also through the experience of our family. We understood some of the helplessness and anxiety because of the decisions made about my appointments. While we cannot control or anticipate those these circumstances, we can control how we respond to those decisions and how we can be a part of something bigger than ourselves. I think our journey has taught us that being missional is not about the process that we bring from church to church, but really a posture and an intentionality that we bring to how we love each other, the people in the congregation, and the people in the community.

I celebrate the chance I have had over the last five years to clarify the driving passion behind my ministry and my calling. Living as a person privileged in my society means that I have had few obstacles challenging my ability to be authentic and to live out the fullest expression of Christ to my family and to those I serve. My passion is to push back against the forces of empire and colonialism within me and in the churches I serve so that others, like I have, can experience the freedom to be all that God has created them to be. And, while I admit I wanted to see the fruits of my passion have a deep impact on the churches I serve, I realized that as a part of the United Methodist system, my family and I are part of a bigger calling and vision for the North Texas Annual Conference.

I celebrate being a part of a bigger vision and not just chasing my own personal vision. Having another year to process what has happened over the last five years has helped me to see a bigger picture. Being a part of a larger structure and working under a

Bishop and District Superintendents that preside over three hundred churches and an incredible geographic region, mean that while my personal ministry is central to me, my family and I are a part of larger vision and a part of a larger movement of churches. I believe that this is a positive characteristic of our denomination and gives me and the churches I serve a broader and more challenging vision.

The scripture that has helped me to understand my place as a missional pastor in the United Methodist Church, comes from harvest story in Matthew 13. It is a story that Jesus tells to talk about the readiness of the disciples to understand what God is doing. He tells of a farmer spreading seed and seeing if it will grow in different types of soil. In the last five years, I have felt like our family has been some of the seed that God has been spreading in communities like Mabank, Prosper, and now Argyle. In our life and our ministry there is the potential for the kingdom of God to sprout forth under the right circumstances. We are not the farmers, we are the vessels through which the seed of God's love is planted in the mission fields in which we serve. Being able to see ourselves in he right place in the story, has given my family peace and a context to understand our place in what God is doing.

A year ago, I could not name claim to be grateful for much of what the last five years, but with time, my family and I have been able to start celebrating how God has worked in our lives. I thank God for God's call upon my life to be a missional leader and the opportunities I have had had to be able to plant the seeds of missional imagination into the lives of many in the churches I have served. My family has grown under the pressure of our moves. There are perspectives and life experiences that challenge the cultures of affluent congregations and allows us to have a prophetic presence in the

communities that we have served. When I started this process, I wanted to have a clearer sense of what being a missional leader would mean for me and a medium through which to synthesize and express that understanding. Having completed this project and gone through all that I have experienced, I feel like I have accomplished what I have set out to do. And, as I stand the on the precipice of the next chapter of my life and my ministry, I feel empowered to continue the ministry to which my family and I have been called.

APPENDIX A

FAMILY MISSIONAL PILGRIMAGE ORIENTATION

Prosper United Methodist Church
Orientation Meeting
December 9, 2012

Agenda

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Purpose

Review Itinerary and Basic Questions

Consider Possible Second Missional Weekend

Review *A Mile in My Shoes* Chapter 1

Share Reflections

Introduce *A Mile in My Shoes* Chapter 2

Next Steps
Review Chapters 1 and 2 at Home
Complete Next Set of Journal Questions by Tuesday, December 4, 2012

Next Meeting Dates:
January 11, 12, and 13, 2013

Closing Prayer

Prosper United Methodist Church
Family Mission Weekend
January 11, 12 and 13

Itinerary

Arrival: Friday afternoon by 6:30pm
Departure: Sunday after church at Oak Cliff UMC

Friday, January 11, 2013

5:00 pm to 7:00 pm	Arrival and Check-In
7:00 pm to 8:00 pm	Welcome and Meal
8:00 pm to 8:30 pm	Devotion and Sleeping

Saturday, January 12, 2013

8:00 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast and Morning Devotion
9:00 am to 9:30 am	Ice-breakers
9:30 am to 11:30 am	Mission, Work and Activities (In Oak Cliff community and at Oak Cliff UMC)
11:30 am to 12:00 pm	Return for Meal
12:00 pm to 1:00 pm	Meal
1:30 pm to 4:00 pm	Mission, Work and Activities (In Oak Cliff Community and at Oak Cliff UMC)
4:30 pm to 5:00 pm	Return for Meal
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm	Meal
6:00 pm to 6:30 pm	Free time
6:30 pm to 7:30 pm	Teaching Session Dr. Joerg Rieger
7:30 pm to 8:00 pm	Closing Devotion
8:00 pm to 8:30 pm	Sleep

Sunday, January 13, 2013

8:00 am to 9:00 am	Breakfast
9:00 am to 10:00 am	Preparation for Church
10:30 am to 12:00 pm	Attend Service at Oak Cliff UMC
12:00 pm	Leave for home

Partner Churches:

Tyler Street United Methodist Church
927 West 10th Street Dallas, TX 75208
(214) 946-8106
www.tsumc.org

Oak Cliff United Methodist Church
East Jefferson Blvd. Dallas, TX 75203
(214) 943-4328
www.oakcliffumc.org

Cost: $50 per person/night; Scholarships available

Accommodations: Bennett Hall (C2K House)
(located directly across from Tyler Street United Methodist Church)
www.c2kdallas.org

Bennett Hall is the name of the two-story, red brick building in which C2K is housed.

It can sleep up to forty-eight guests in three rooms located on the first floor. The small room has four bunks beds to sleep a total of eight people. The medium room has eight bunk beds that sleep up to sixteen people. The largest room can accommodate up to twenty-four people. There is also ample floor space upstairs for people with sleeping bags and/air mattresses. C2K does not usually supply linens, however special arrangements can be made for an additional fee.

The second floor of Bennett Hall features a large meeting room that can be configured to meet your changing needs. It serves as the dining hall, orientation room and informal worship space for C2K. This room shares the second floor with a full kitchen equipped with two ovens and two refrigerators.

Bennett Hall has a men's restroom and women's shower room downstairs. The reverse is true upstairs where the men's shower is located.

Types of Work:
Cleaning and working at Oak Cliff United Methodist Church
Painting, organizing and grounds work at Oak Cliff UMC.
Playing with kids, children's activities

Community work: Cleaning yards
Basic painting
Some basic carpentry

Doctor of Ministry Requirements:

This project is about the impact of spiritual pilgrimage on our lives, our families and our attitudes. We will be leaving Prosper, Texas to travel to Oak Cliff, Texas for the sake of serving and growing in faith. This is something that many in our church have longed to do and do with their families.

Before and after each session you will be asked to complete the journal questions. After you attend the meeting and do the associated work, complete the questions and email the responses back to me. Answer the questions in light of our conversation, readings and the mission weekend. Your responses are the basis of my project.

Also, if you would like to record anything that your young child might have to say, please do so. All responses are important.

After the weekend, I will be contact half of the group and do follow up interviews within a week of the mission weekend. The interviews will be with all of the members of the family who went.

APPENDIX B

FAMILY MISSIONAL PILGIRMMAGE FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

FAMILY MISSION PILGRIMAGE FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

1. The Family Mission Pilgrimage was a positive experience for your family.

Disagree Somewhat Disagree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

2. The Family Mission Weekend gave my family an opportunity to spend time getting to know people from different socio-economic communities.

Disagree Somewhat Disagree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

3. I was concerned about issues of safety before the Family Mission Weekend.

Disagree Somewhat Disagree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

4. I had some concern about the people I would encounter on the Family Mission Weekend.

Disagree Somewhat Disagree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

5. After going on the Family Mission Weekend, I learned that some of the concerns and anxiety I had were unfounded.

Disagree Somewhat Disagree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

6. After going on the Family Mission Pilgrimage, I was not concerned about the people I met.

Disagree Somewhat Disagree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

7. Going on the Family Mission Pilgrimage encouraged me to build relationships with individuals and families from lower socio-economic backgrounds in my local community, or to continue my relationship with the church in Oak Cliff.

Disagree Somewhat Disagree N/A Somewhat Agree Agree

APPENDIX C

FAMILY MISSIONAL PILGRIMAGE
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FOR ASSOCIATE PASTOR

ASSOCIATE PASTOR
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

Make sure to define what success means to me:

How does the person I am interviewing define success?

Do you think the project was a success in improving attitudes of the pilgrims?

What do you think worked? And why?

What do think worked in negatively affecting the attitudes of pilgrims? And why?

What do you think could have been done differently? And why?

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